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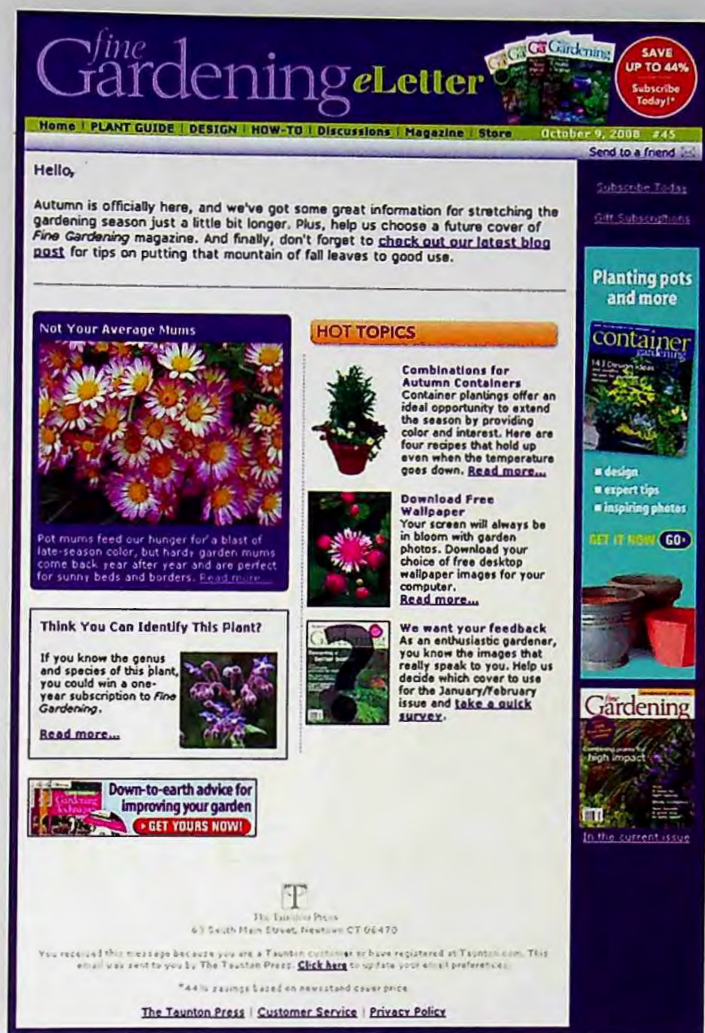
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ON THE COVER »

Fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum**, USDA Hardiness Zones 8–11) highlights this planting at Marchant's Hardy Plants in Sussex, England.

Photo by Clive Nichols



*See invasive alert on page 16.

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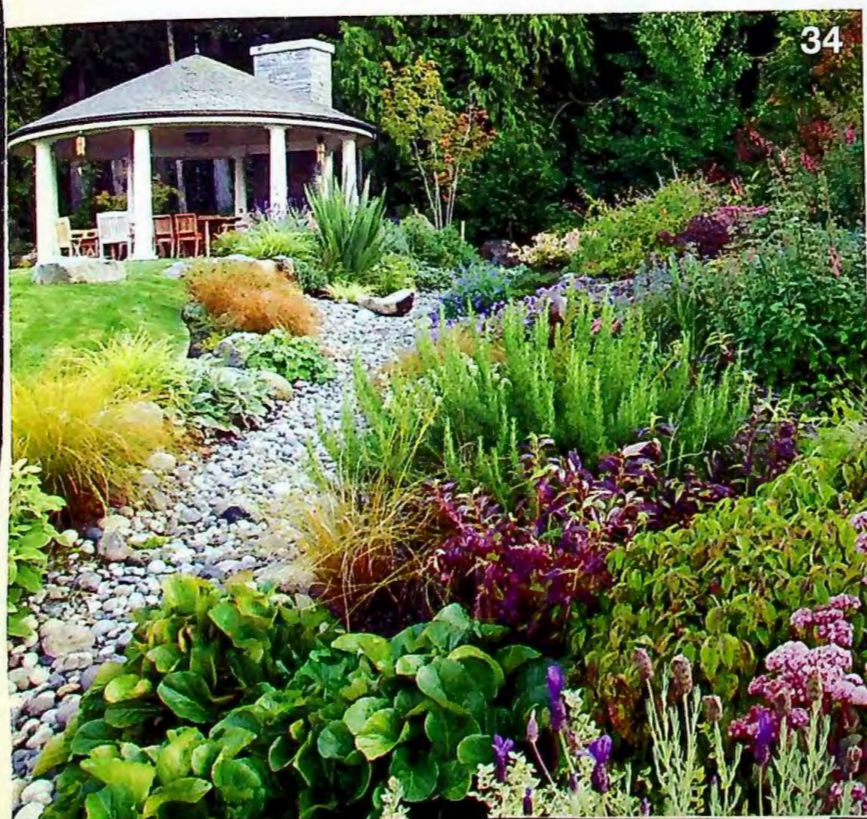
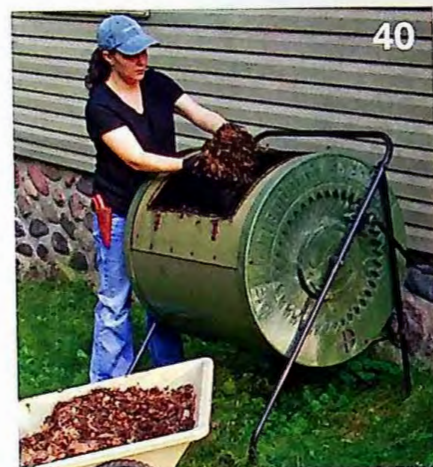
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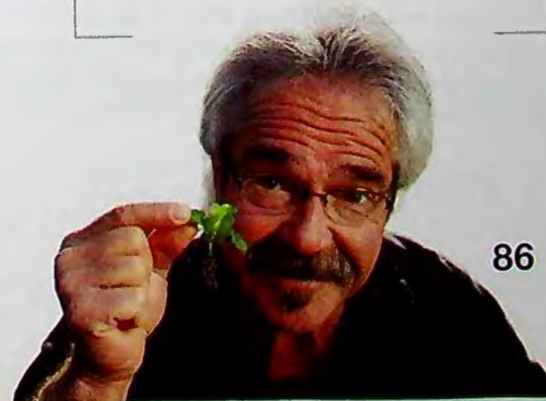
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editor's letter

I tumble because I must

COMPOSTING IS the kind of activity I like best: You don't do very much, yet it helps your garden. It is almost too good to be true, as if sitting on the couch watching *Gilligan's Island* somehow made you lose weight.

My method for composting is with a tumbler. Many years ago, I got sucked into buying one by promises of easy compost in two weeks. It never happened that quickly (and I'm sure the fault is all mine), but I still like my tumbler.

Lynn Bement's article, "What's Your Composting Style?," has me wondering if another method might suit me better. I'm a guy who has little time, doesn't like a lot of fuss, and easily forgets things. I think I might be a pile guy: You toss your scraps on it and walk away. That is just my speed.

I've been married long enough to know, however, that my perfectly sensible plan will never make it by my wife. She shoots down such logical ideas as feeding the kids leftover spaghetti for breakfast (she would have fed it to them for lunch, so why not do the same thing a few hours early?) and letting the kids splash the water in the dog's dish (it's easier than getting them dressed for the pool, and they won't get a sunburn).

My wife doesn't care about what goes on outside of our house. The lawn can get a few feet tall, weeds can crowd my beds, and invasive species can use our property as their local headquarters, and she won't say a word. But if I start to throw vegetable scraps and plant debris into a pile and let it rot, she will put her foot down. I know—it doesn't make sense to me, either.

So I tumble. It isn't hard. I throw our kitchen scraps in the tumbler so that we don't see them rot. I turn it only when I add new material. I don't pay attention to carbon-to-nitrogen ratios. In fall, I empty the tumbler and put the compost around some plants. And then I go back inside to see if Gilligan will ever make it off that island.

—Steve Aitken, editor



Photo: Steven Cominsky

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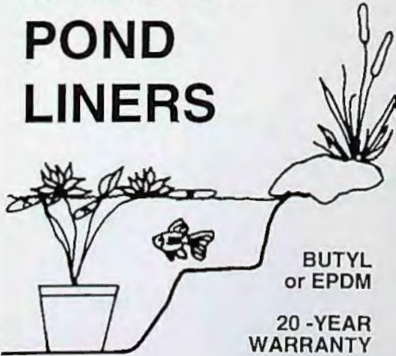



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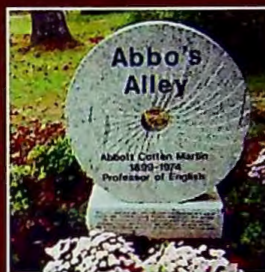
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over the fence



The mysteries of bat guano

Have all the bats in all the world suddenly become constipated? Must be. Jeff Gillman lists guano as a nonrenewable resource in his article, "Just Because It's Organic..." (October 2009). The bats in my barn (not belfry) are still doing what comes naturally, and the sweepings fertilize my flower beds.

By the way, the illustrations for the article are a treat. The artist just has to be a gardener, too!

—Candy Jens
Tamaqua, Pennsylvania

Jeff Gillman responds: Guano is aged—not fresh—excrement. Aging concentrates it and makes it a richer resource, which is why this stuff is mined. It usually takes 100 years or more to age, and the places from which it is mined, such as caves in Jamaica, can be badly damaged from the mining process. This is particularly important because there are unique species that live in the guano, and so unique ecosystems are being hurt. It is true that guano is a renewable resource—but it is a very slowly renewable resource.

Invasives, part I

The letter concerning invasive plants in your October 2009 issue displays a typically misguided understanding of the biological systems that support diversity, the balance of nature, and even our own lives. It is certainly fine if the writer wants to spend the rest of her life extirpating self-introduced invasives from her own garden. On occasion, I've done my penance—chameleon plant, anyone? The problem is not the garden but

the natural environments into which these introduced invasives transport themselves.

Some (but not all) of these plants not only sterilize their environment by out-competing native plants but also can cause millions of dollars in damages as a result of their unbridled fecundity. These plants constrain the natural biological diversity of an area, altering its balance and causing instability among its inhabi-

tants. There is evidence that animals that feed on insects, such as birds, frogs, and lizards, suffer losses, in turn, from the alteration of natural ecosystems. Invasives, such as kudzu, Brazilian pepper, Lehmann love grass, Oriental bittersweet, multiflora rose, and thousands of others, have not done our woodlands or our rangelands any favors. It's obvious that not all introduced plants are invasive. And some plants become invasive only in certain circumstances—behaving civilly in sandy soils, for example, but turning into thugs in clay. As far as I've seen, the emphasis on invasives has not been to label gardeners as criminals (though many of us, including myself, are). The emphasis has been on warning us that we might inadvertently contribute to the spread of noxious plants that do more harm to our own environment—and our pocketbooks—than we realize.

—Eric Grissell
Sonoita, Arizona

Invasives, part II

On the cover of the October issue and inside on page 21 (Planting Plan), there is a photo of gorgeous late-season blooms. I was deeply shocked when I discovered that one of these tempting swaths of bloom is purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). I had expected better of *Fine Gardening*.

I know each issue contains an alert of plants that are considered invasive in some parts of the country. There are many plants that can be invasive in some areas and are excellent garden plants in others. Purple loosestrife is not such a plant. It is a serious invader of many types of wetlands, including wet meadows, prairie potholes, river- and stream banks, lake shores, tidal and nontidal marshes, and ditches. It can quickly form dense stands that displace native vegetation. Purple loosestrife can spread rapidly due to its prolific seed production; one plant can produce as many as two million seeds per year. Purple loosestrife has been found in all the contiguous states except Florida and in all the Canadian provinces. It is now considered invasive in more than half of the United States. This plant is so attractive that it can be tempting to uninformed gardeners. It is not an acceptable practice to present as a garden plant one that does so much damage to the ecosystem.

—Joyce Wiza
Thompson, Connecticut

Clarification

One of our "100 Skills That Will Make You a Better Gardener" (August 2009) features an image of a color wheel. That is no regular color wheel—it is The Gardener's Color Wheel (\$15, www.thegardenerscolorwheel.com). Here is what it should have looked like:



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NEWS AND NOTEWORTHY ITEMS



PLANTS

The mystery of the red dahlia

Tracing the ancestry of a pass-along plant can stump even the most diligent plant detective. Take the case of "Catherine Becker" dahlia (photo, left). It came to Old House Gardens, a nursery devoted to heirloom bulbs, a few years ago, courtesy of a customer from the Chicago area. That customer obtained it from Catherine Becker, a farmer's wife outside of Wausaukee, Wisconsin, who had been growing the rugged, prolific-blooming tuber for decades.

Old House Gardens trialed the dahlia for a few years, then offered it for sale in 2009. Soon after, they received an email from a master gardener in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, saying that she had been researching the history of a red dahlia that seemed eerily similar to "Catherine Becker". The history of that red dahlia stretched back more than 100 years. Old House Gardens began calling their plant "Wisconsin Red" (photo, right).

A few months later, another customer, this time from New York, wrote to Old House Gardens with tales of a prolific-blooming, tough-as-nails, easy-to-store, yet unnamed red dahlia. Are all of these dahlias the same? Could they be long-lost sisters, separated by gardeners with too many tubers on their hands? If you know any dope, talk to the head gumshoe at Old House Gardens, Charlie the Cat (charlie@oldhousegardens.com).



—Steve Aitken is the editor.



COOL IDEA

Playing with your grasses

I go through the same dilemma every November: Should I cut back my grasses or not? I know there is no right or wrong answer, but I usually opt to leave them in place for some winter interest. They inevitably collapse, however, under the weight of snow sometime in mid-January and spend the next two months looking like a messy pile of oversize matchsticks. This year, I'm going to try something a little more imaginative, following the lead of simple, a Pennsylvania artist.

The artist uses tall ornamental grasses in a creative way. After cutting them back, simple ties the dried debris together with twine and shapes them into people and other animals. "I live right by a school, and you should see the kids laughing as they ride by and see these wacky sculptures



in my yard," he says. To make them stand up, simple uses rebar supports pounded into the ground. Occasionally, he spray-paints the figures bright colors to liven things up. Over the years, simple has branched out into doing his grass sculptures for private and botanical gardens across the country.

—Danielle Sherry is an associate editor.



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WHAT TO WATCH

Botany of Desire on PBS

Do we control plants, or have they been shaping us? This is the intriguing question Michael Pollan poses in *Botany of Desire*, airing on PBS on October 28. The documentary, based on Pollan's book of the same name, explores the complex, symbiotic relationship between plants and humans.

According to Pollan, plants act as mirrors of humans, reflecting what we desire. He focuses on four species—apples, tulips, cannabis, and potatoes—and examines how they have adapted and changed over time based on our desires for sweetness, beauty, intoxication, and control over our environment.

The documentary examines the political, social, and cultural implications of allowing our desires to dictate our agricultural strategies, especially the decision to farm in monocultures. Pollan states that humans cast "evolutionary votes" every day when we choose, for example, the flowers we display, the foods we eat, and the drugs we ingest. Ignoring this influence could have a profound effect not only on various plant species but also on our own species.

—Suzanne Noel is the senior copy/production editor.



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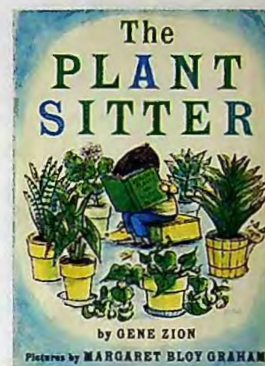
... KIDS CATEGORY

One of the best things about working at *Fine Gardening* is that I am now surrounded by people who understand why I am so attached to one of my favorite books: *The Plant Sitter* by Gene Zion. I have loved this book since I was a child. My nongardening friends don't get it, but anyone whose pulse quickens at the sight of a nursery does understand.

The Plant Sitter is about a boy named Tommy, who, one day, announces to his parents that he has started a business caring for his neighbors' plants while they are on vacation. His parents are annoyed by his ever-growing collection, but Tommy conscientiously learns to feed, prune, and propagate the plants. The book brilliantly depicts the joys, fears, complications, and satisfactions of gardening.

The Plant Sitter, unfortunately, is out of print, but you might be able to find a copy at used bookstores or online at eBay or Amazon.com.

—Kerry Ann Moore is an assistant editor.

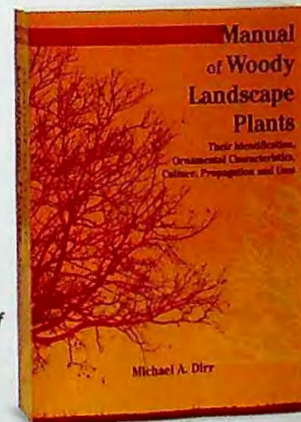


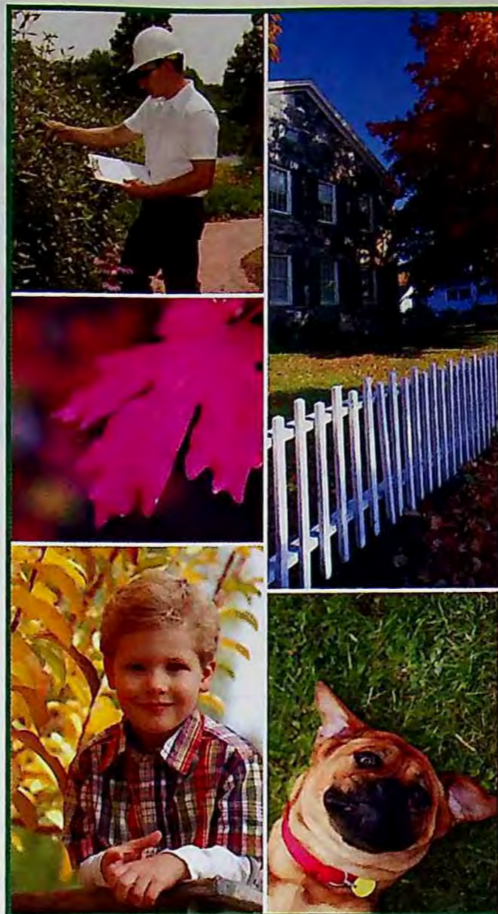
... SHRUB CATEGORY

You know a reference book is essential when it is commonly referred to by its author's last name. *Webster's* means "dictionary," and *Roget's* means "thesaurus." Gardeners have "Dirr," as in "I never buy a shrub without checking Dirr" or "Check Dirr to see how big it will get."

"Dirr" is short for *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants* by Michael Dirr. It is the bible of shrubs, and if you don't own it, you should buy the recently released sixth edition. It tells you everything you need to know (short of a color picture) about virtually every woody plant you could want to grow. "Dirr" costs roughly the same as a decent-size dwarf conifer (\$76.80 at Amazon.com), but you will wonder how you ever gardened without it.

—Steve Aitken is the editor.





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INVASIVE ALERT The following plants recommended in this issue are considered invasive in some areas of the country. Please visit www.invasive.org/weedus/index.html for more information.

PLANT	STATES	PAGE
• Butterfly bush (<i>Buddleia davidii</i>)	CA, KY, NJ, NC, OR, PA, WA, WV	page 21
• Euonymus (<i>Euonymus fortunei</i>)	AL, CT, GA, IN, KY, MD, MO, OH, TN, VA, WI	page 61
• Fountain grass (<i>Pennisetum setaceum</i>)	AZ, CA, HI, NV	page 4
• Giant reed (<i>Arundo donax</i>)	AZ, CA, GA, MD, NV, NM, TX, VA	page 65
• Italian arum (<i>Arum italicum</i>)	OR, VA	calendar
• Japanese barberry (<i>Berberis thunbergii</i>)	CT, DE, IN, KY, ME, MD, MA, MO, NH, NJ, NY, NC, OH, PA, RI, TN, VT, VA, WV, WI	page 61
• Japanese blood grass (<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>)	FL, GA, VA	page 63
• Japanese yew (<i>Taxus cuspidata</i>)	NJ, VA	page 50
• Jupiter's beard (<i>Centranthus ruber</i>)	CA, OR, WA	page 72
• Kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate (<i>Persicaria orientalis</i>)	MI, NJ	page 33
• Miscanthus (<i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> var. <i>purpurascens</i>)	CT, GA, IL, IN, KY, MD, NJ, NC, PA, SC, TN, VA, WI	page 60
• Perilla (<i>Perilla frutescens</i>)	IL, MD, MO, PA, TN, VA, WV	page 31
• Plume grass (<i>Saccharum ravennae</i>)	AZ, UT	page 65
• Spirea (<i>Spiraea japonica</i>)	KY, MD, NJ, NC, PA, TN, VA	page 25
• Vinca vine (<i>Vinca major</i>)	AZ, CA, GA, LA, MD, NM, NC, OR, TN, UT, WA	page 45

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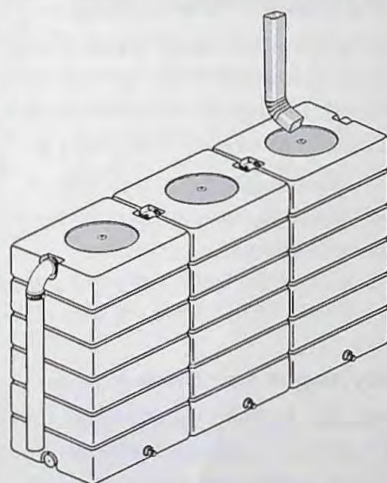
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tips

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fg@taunton.com. We pay for tips we publish.



WINNING TIP



Recycle a broken lawn mower

Some years ago, I had an old push mower that broke down for good. I removed the engine and all the workings, and I now use the remaining mower deck as a cart to move heavy potted plants around my garden. Its low profile means I don't have to strain my back lifting the pots onto a taller cart.

—Jean Demeter
Albion, California



Prize for winning tip

Share your tip and you could win a one-year subscription to *Fine Gardening*.

My favorite gardening tool

When I inherited a box of old tools, I discovered the perfect hand tool for a multitude of gardening chores. It's a drywaller's jab saw. It has a 6-inch-long, tapered blade with a sharp tip and beveled teeth, and a sturdy plastic handle. It's great for digging and edging, and is also useful for loosening soil in containers prior to spring planting.

—Jeff Kegerris
Batavia, Illinois

Woven branches support vines

I've found a simple, easy, and attractive way to attach vines to the railings on my porch. Each year, in late winter, I prune my willow shrub down to the ground. Then, while the pruned branches are still flexible, I weave them in and out of the rungs of the railing. The basket-weave effect is artistic, and my vines readily attach to the branches in spring.

—Carol Kawula
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Garden how you live

After much trial and error, I had an epiphany: I'm not Martha Stewart, so I should stop trying to garden like her. I decided to garden how I live. My style is experimental and casual to the extreme, so I figured my gardens should be, too.

Whether you are planting a single container or acres of gardens, think about your own style and stay true to it. Don't plant formally if you prefer a casual style; conversely, if a sprawling plant jungle will drive you bonkers, make sure

you take that into consideration when selecting your plants.

—Kerry Michaels
Freeport, Maine

Beautiful homemade plant stakes

I make my own decorative plant stakes from long pieces of metal conduit and metal curtain-rod finials. I cut the pipe into lengths that are suitable for tying plants like hollyhocks to. After driving the pipes into the ground, I attach the finials. There are lots of finials out there to choose from, and I can make any-size stake I need for about \$4 each.

—Nancy Mellen
Hingham, Massachusetts

Daffodils for Christmas

A few years ago, I happened to plant daffodil bulbs under my dryer vent. Little did I know that the extra heat from the vent would mean that I'd have daffodils blooming for New Year's Day and sometimes even as early as Christmas.

—Lucy E. Bartlett
Tiger, Georgia

Easy sight for sore eyes

At my age, I can't read the labels on pesticide and fertilizer bottles without using my reading glasses. So when I bring home a new bottle, I use a permanent marker to write the measurements in big letters on the bottles (for example, "1 oz. per gallon"). I also mark my watering cans because they don't always hold a round number of gallons.

—Matthew Fluke
Eureka, California



Twips!

Share tips and ideas on Twitter.com

Twitter is a social-networking Web site that attracts many gardeners. Here are tips from some inspirational gardening "tweeters."



Take time to enjoy the fruits of your labor

Make sure you create a space in your garden to rest and relax in. It's too easy to get so caught up in the work of the garden that you don't stop to take in all that you've accomplished. I've just created a dreaming space in my garden (photo, above). I lie under the tree, look up and dream, and just relax. After 10 years in this garden, I'm kicking myself for not having done this earlier. It's a slice of heaven.

—LeAnn Locher (@Lelonopo)
Portland, Oregon

An herbal bath from your herb garden

I discovered the virtues of a bath bouquet following a recent bout of flu when I needed a pick-me-up. I

went into the garden and picked a few of my favorite herbs and plants, including chamomile, lemon verbena, eucalyptus, sage, and thyme. I tied them together, crushed them slightly to release their oils, and added them to my bathwater. The scent that resulted was amazing, and it filled the house. The lemon verbena and eucalyptus really added a fresh, clean edge, while the other herbs helped add depth and maturity to the mix. I would recommend this to anyone who is in need of some pampering.

—Ryan Lewis (@RyansGarden)
Wales, United Kingdom

Dog-crate composting

My two dogs thwarted my efforts to have a compost heap. They were always getting into the scraps, eating stuff I did not want them eating in the first place and essentially making a mess of themselves and my heap. One day, I was in the shed and noticed a dog crate I no longer used, and realized that I didn't have to spend money on an enclosed compost bin. I dragged it out to the edge of the garden and staked it down, and now have a place to throw my scraps (photo, right) that is relatively free from disturbance by bigger animals.



I simply lift up the gate and throw in the scraps. I've even turned it over and will continue to do so periodically to stir the "soup." I am looking forward to spreading my compost in next year's garden. Rather than keep the dogs in—as it was intended to do—my old dog crate is now keeping them out.

—Kathy Stillwell (@KASTillwell)
Franklin, North Carolina

By the way ...

If you'd like to follow *Fine Gardening* on Twitter, go to www.twitter.com. Log in, create a profile, and search for @Michelle_at_FG (Associate Editor Michelle Gervais) or @kate_frank (Web Producer Kate Frank). Then just click "Follow."



plants

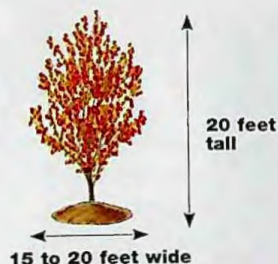
TO KNOW & GROW

This tree's fall color can stop traffic

NAME: Red Fox katsura tree
(*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*
'Rotfuchs')

USDA HARDINESS ZONES:
4 to 8

CONDITIONS: Full sun
(for best color) to partial shade;
moist, well-drained soil



TO ME, KATSURAS are nearly perfect trees. They have beautiful heart-shaped foliage; are relatively low maintenance; and in the fall, they emit the aroma of burnt sugar (some even say it reminds them of cotton candy). How can you beat that? How about a selection with purple foliage?

In spring, the foliage of Red Fox emerges as a magnificent purple-red. As the season progresses, the purple changes to a tint of dark blue-green—almost black. The leaves are thicker than the species and are leathery in appearance but still maintain a beautiful heart shape. Then, just when you think the story ends, this tree's fall color erupts as the leaves change to an array of yellows and oranges. The brown, shaggy bark makes Red Fox eye-catching in winter, as well.

This great little tree is guaranteed to make everyone (even if they're in their cars), stop and stare.

- **Pest-free trees with a strong form:** Katsuras don't seem to be bothered by any particular bugs or diseases, making them the ultimate low-care plant. They also have a magnificent vase shape, making them a great focal point.
- **Enhance the pH, enhance the color:** Fall color is usually better when katsuras are planted in acidic soil, and they do not like to dry out. So site them where you can keep them moist but someplace that also has good drainage.

—Stacia Lynde is the greenhouse supervisor and plant development chair for Carlton Plants in Dayton, Oregon.

SOURCES
Forestfarm,
Williams, Ore.;
541-846-7269;
www.forestfarm.com

Greer Gardens,
Eugene, Ore.;
800-548-0111;
www.greer-gardens.com



PLANT PICK from Stephanie Cohen

Stephanie Cohen is a plant expert, author, and lecturer who travels from coast to coast sharing her vast gardening knowledge.

A no-spray, worry-free rose that's oh so lovely

NAME: Oso Easy™ Paprika rose
(*Rosa* 'ChewMayTime')

ZONES: 5 to 8

CONDITIONS: Full sun; moist, well-drained, loose soil



1 to 2 feet tall
1 to 2 feet wide



WHEN IT COMES TO ROSES, I feel it's time to throw away the sprayer and just enjoy their beauty. Fortunately, Oso Easy™ roses were developed by someone whose criteria is the same as mine: no black spot or mildew.

Oso Easy™ Paprika rose has a nice mounded shape and leaves that are glossy green with hints of red on the new growth. It's nice to have a rose whose foliage is as attractive as the flowers. In summer, this little gem is covered with spicy-smelling, single, reddish orange blooms with a bright yellow eye. The unusual color causes people to stop and ask, "What cultivar is this?" Oso Easy™ Paprika rose requires only minimal pruning. In the spring, any dead tops or crossing stems should be eliminated, and it may need slight reshaping to keep it

inbounds. Other than that, this gorgeous rose is generally maintenance-free.

► **Keep the show going:** Deadheading ensures a long bloom season—sometimes continuing through fall. And even though the stems are short, this particular rose is great as a cut flower. The vibrant blooms add a nice pop of color to summer bouquets.

► **Two particular companions are tops:** I paired my Paprika rose with a yellow-reblooming rose, creating a lovely color echo. To complete the garden vignette, I added Adonis Blue™ butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii** 'Adokeep', Zones 5–9) for contrast because it has deep blue flowers, has a compact habit, and is fragrant.

SOURCES

Big Dipper Farm,
Black Diamond,
Wash.; 360-886-
8133; www.bigdipperfarm.com

Garden Crossings,
Zeeland, Mich.;
616-875-6355;
www.gardencrossings.com



An interesting plant with a curly mop top

NAME: Cassidy™ lilyturf (*Liriope muscari* 'Cassidy')

ZONES: 7 to 10

SIZE: 10 to 12 inches tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Partial shade; moist, well-drained soil

No, this plant is not a victim of a beauty-parlor perm—it was specially bred for those curly locks. Lilyturfs have long been adored by shade gardeners because they are among the few grasslike plants that actually thrive in dim conditions. With its unique twisted, ribbonlike foliage, 'Cassidy' lilyturf is bound to become a favorite. For those living in cooler areas where it's not hardy, think about putting it in a mixed container. Regardless of where you choose to site it, this cultivar is sure to illicit admiration from even the most savvy plant collectors. Keep the plant mainly in shade to maintain its spiraling growth pattern.

SOURCE: 'Cassidy' lilyturf is distributed by Hort Couture (www.hortcoutureplants.com).



Frosty selections

Fall is beginning to wind down, and now is the time that many of us start regretting the fact that we don't have enough in our gardens for winter interest. Here are some late-season recommendations—some oddball unknowns and some common workhorses—all of which deserve a spot in your garden.



◀ **NAME:** 'Autumn Joy' sedum (*Sedum* 'Autumn Joy')

ZONES: 3 to 11

SIZE: 2 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil

ICING ON THE CAKE: Large, lacy seed heads stay put even under heavy snow.



▲ **NAME:** Dwarf fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*)

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: 3 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil

ICING ON THE CAKE: Leaves with brilliant fall color often last through first few frosts.



◀ **NAME:** Cranberry cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster apiculatus*)

ZONES: 5 to 7

SIZE: 3 feet tall and 8 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; well-drained soil

ICING ON THE CAKE: Large red berries linger long after foliage is gone.



▶ **NAME:** River birch (*Betula nigra*)

ZONES: 4 to 9

SIZE: Up to 60 feet tall and 40 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil

ICING ON THE CAKE: Exfoliating bark is absolutely spectacular.



▲ **NAME:** Paper bush (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*)

ZONES: 6 to 10

SIZE: 5 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; rich, moist, well-drained soil

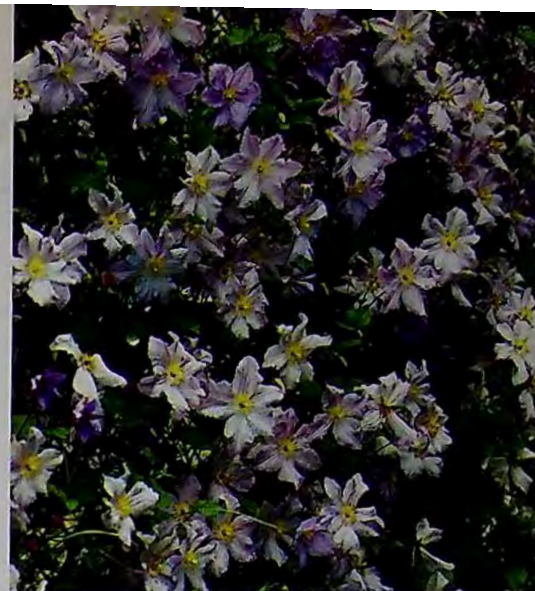
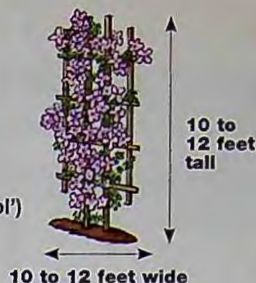
ICING ON THE CAKE: Fleshy stems give way to papery blossoms in late winter.

A heavy-blooming clematis

NAME: 'Blue Angel' clematis (*Clematis* 'Blue Angel', syn. *C.* 'Blekitny Aniol')

ZONES: 4 to 9

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; rich, moist, well-drained soil



THE FIRST TIME I SAW 'Blue Angel' clematis in full, glorious bloom, it was a heavenly sight. Hundreds of lavender blossoms blanketed the plant, making it virtually impossible to see even one speck of the green leaves. Pale centers and ruffled edges enhance the ethereal quality of the 4-inch-wide blossoms. For bountiful flowers alone, 'Blue Angel' (which, in Polish, is *blekitny aniol*) is exceptional, but factor in a robust habit and a carefree nature and this clematis is truly divine.

Contrary to the fussy reputations of some clematis, 'Blue Angel' thrives with minimal care. To ensure success, keep in mind the cardinal rule of growing clematis: Give it plenty of sunlight, but keep its roots cool. Vigorous, Jack-in-the-Beanstalk-like growth can top 10 feet in a year, especially in warmer temperatures.

- ▶ **With this plant, it's all about location:** 'Blue Angel' clematis's exuberant floral display will delight from mid-June to early August. An eastern exposure is ideal because strong sunlight will fade its pastel flowers; reserve southern positions for clematis that are deeper shades of blue, red, and purple.
- ▶ **Pruning is essential; disease is nonexistent:** Because flowering occurs on new stems, old stems should be cut back hard in late winter. 'Blue Angel' is not troubled by clematis wilt.

—Richard Hawke is manager of plant evaluations at the Chicago Botanic Garden.

SOURCES

Donahue's Greenhouse,
Faribault, Minn.;
507-334-8404; www.donahuesclematis.com

Joy Creek Nursery,
Scappoose, Ore.;
503-543-7474;
www.joycreek.com

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Q&A

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Is a humane trap a safe way to get rid of furry garden invaders? —Anna Martino, Wichita, Kansas

John Hadidian, coauthor of *Wild Neighbors: The Humane Approach to Living with Wildlife*, responds:

In most people's minds, humane traps are no-kill, cage-like devices that capture animals using bait. Some claim that certain snares and padded leghold traps are humane, as well, but these devices are more often inhumane because of the injuries they can cause as animals struggle to free themselves. It is important to remember that any trap can be inhumane when used inappropriately. An animal left in a cage for hours in extreme heat or cold can suffer extensively.

Whenever we begin to think about wild animals as pests, we set up a negative

What goes in must come out. Using a humane trap may sound safe, but dealing with wild animals can be tricky. If you must remove an animal from your property, call an animal-control specialist.

image of them that leads, all too often, to a desire to eradicate. Removing or killing a problem-causing animal, however, typically leads to only a short period before another takes its place. If we visualize wild animals as creatures that occasionally cause conflicts rather than as pests, we can apply conflict-resolution strategies that create environmentally responsible and humane solutions. Fortunately, there are a growing number of resources, such as one found at the Web site of The Humane Society of the United States (www.humanesociety.org/wildneighbors), that can provide gardeners with realistic, effective, and humane solutions to animal problems.

If, after careful consideration, you determine that you would still like to trap and remove an animal, it is important to be aware of the laws in your state that regulate trapping, especially because this may call for a permit. Sometimes you will be allowed to relocate problem-causing wildlife—although you should be very careful not to separate mothers from their litters—but more often, the law will require that the animal be killed. Then your local animal-control agency may be the best source of advice.

The important thing to remember is that wildlife is indeed that: wild. You'll need to use extreme caution to keep from being bitten and the animal from being injured. You'll also have to find a legal space in which to release the animal. It is safest to avoid trapping an animal yourself; contact your local animal-control agency if you cannot coexist with local wildlife and find it necessary to have a "pest" removed.



Keep 'em out

There are all sorts of strategies to deter wild animals from your garden, but they generally fall into one of three categories: repelling, excluding, or modifying habitat.

► **REPELLING:** Commercially available or home-made repellents can be effective when damage first begins. The commercial varieties will state on the label what species they are registered for, and will indicate whether or not they can be used on edibles. Frightening devices, such as Mylar tape or motion-activated sprinklers, can also be useful in repelling animals from areas.

► **EXCLUDING:** When damage is more severe or animals are more persistent, installing a fence to exclude them from your property may be the most appropriate option.

► **MODIFYING HABITAT:** In the long run, gardening with plants that wild animals do not like (planting daffodils instead of tulips, for example) may be the most effective way to enjoy both the beauty of the garden as well as local wildlife.

How do you shock a shrub into producing abundant blooms?

—Jim Sully, Piedmont, South Dakota

Bill Hlubik, professor at Rutgers University, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, and director of the EARTH Center in North Brunswick, New Jersey, responds:

I would prefer to use the terms “enhancing” or “encouraging” rather than “shocking,” which sounds like cruel and unusual punishment. We really don’t shock or force blooms unless we bring plants or cuttings indoors or into a controlled environment.

Encouraging outdoor shrubs to increase the number of blooms is dependent on factors that are within your control, like proper pruning and fertilization, and factors that are not, like natural conditions. For most shrubs, proper pruning at the right time of year is key to achieving an abundant display of flower buds. This is especially true with plants that bloom on old wood and plants with buds produced the previous spring. These shrubs will lose current-season flowering if pruned severely before or during bloom. Prune them, instead, after they have completed blooming to encourage a greater number of shoots and flower buds the following season.

Unlike shrubs that flower on old wood, shrubs that bloom on growth formed in spring are best pruned before new growth begins. These shrubs are typically summer bloomers; in these cases, pruning in late winter or early spring is best.

Certain shrubs that bloom on the current season’s growth, such as ‘Wine and Roses’ weigela (photo, above), can be pruned both before and after bloom. That is because they can continue to produce buds throughout the season and are not limited like those shrubs who bloom only on the previous season’s growth. Pruning these select shrubs twice promotes additional side shoots with flower buds and more pronounced bloom during the current and following seasons.

You are not, therefore, shocking blooms but encouraging blooms with pruning and care. Proper management includes maintaining the right soil acidity to ensure the healthy uptake of nutrients and fertilizing accordingly (excessive fertilizer can sometimes force excessive vegetative growth and limit flower production). Encouraging greater blooms through proper management will not harm plants in the future. But remember: Environmental factors, such as temperature, also play a key role in flowering and are beyond your control.



Prune these shrubs twice

The following shrubs bloom on current-season growth and can be pruned both before and after blooming to achieve substantial flowering:

- ▶ **‘Anthony Waterer’ spirea** (*Spiraea japonica** ‘Anthony Waterer’, USDA Hardiness Zones 4–9)
- ▶ **Cranberry cotoneaster** (*Cotoneaster apiculatus*, Zones 5–7)
- ▶ **Froebel spirea** (*Spiraea japonica** ‘Froebelii’, Zones 4–9)
- ▶ **Oregon grape holly** (*Mahonia aquifolium*, Zones 6–9)
- ▶ **Spreading cotoneaster** (*Cotoneaster divaricatus*, Zones 5–7)
- ▶ **Weigela** (*Weigela* spp. and cvs., Zones 4–9)

*See invasive alert on page 16.

healthy garden

Ants aren't your enemy

WHEN YOU WANDER through your lawn or garden and stumble across an anthill, a small mound of soil molded into tiny pellets, it's often a gardener's first instinct to destroy it. You stomp and kick until the small hill disappears and the tiny ants scurry off. But by doing so, you're actually doing a disservice to your garden. Though most gardeners find these anthills a nuisance, they are our first clue to the important, helpful roles ants play in gardens and lawns—they're tiny rototillers. Tunneling ants turn over as much soil as earthworms do, aerating the soil and redistributing nutrients. Ants are also part of the world recycling crew: acting as scavengers, collecting dead insects and turning them into fertilizer for your soil.

Rather than being seen as pests, ants can be understood as our partners in gardening. One of the most easily observed and important roles that ants play is as seed dispersers. Here in the temperate eastern forests, ants disperse woodland spring wildflowers, such as bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*, USDA Hardiness Zones 3–9), trout lilies (*Erythronium* spp. and cvs., Zones 3–9), and most violets (*Viola* spp. and cvs., Zones 3–9). They conduct this same role with flowering plants across the country. This enterprise is so beneficial that plants appear to have adjusted the timing of flowering and fruiting to take advantage of high ant activity early in the year.

Another advantage of having ants in your garden is protection from herbivores. Ants are attracted to the nectar found on the plant stem or sepals (not the nectar found in flowers that is used by pollinators). The ants patrol these



If you see ants on your peony, let them be. Ants keep predators away while feeding off of the sticky nectar on new buds.

plants and disturb herbivores and seed-eating insects by attacking them, by causing them to fall off the plants, or by interrupting feeding, egg laying, courtship, or molting. The ants crawling all over sticky peony buds in early summer, for example, protect them from enemies, and the ants are rewarded with a rich food source. Some plants



Smart seeds make ants into ACCIDENTAL GARDENERS

Ant-dispersed seeds, like those of Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), have specialist attractants called elaiosomes, or "fat bodies," that are rich in lipids. Ants collect seeds with elaiosomes (left), take them back to the nest, feed the elaiosomes to their larvae, and discard the undamaged seed on the nest's waste heap. The seeds are removed from competition with neighbors, protected from seed predators, and "planted" in the nutrient-rich environment of the ant-waste heap. This process makes a clear argument to keep ants around—if for no other reason than to act as the gardeners of the insect world.

also reward this protective role by housing ants in special structures, in addition to providing them with food rich in proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates.

Ant protection from predation is also beneficial for some of our most common insects. The caterpillars of some butterfly groups produce a sweet substance known as honeydew to attract ant protectors. The ants "farm" the caterpillars, sometimes even carrying them into the ant nests to complete development. This interaction can add more butterflies and birds to your garden as they become attracted to the greater insect activity.

A few garden ants are nuisance species. Native fire ants in the South sting and bite, making them unpleasant visitors to the garden. Nonnative red imported fire ants are a more serious problem. They are overabundant because they have escaped their natural competitors and predators in South America. They damage crops, cause a decline in native-ant populations, and even incapacitate

machinery. Carpenter ants live in rotting wood but do little damage to live garden plants. Most ants, however, have no negative impact at all.

If you don't happen to have a pet anteater in your yard, you can control unwanted ants by pouring hot water into their nests, but we discourage it because of all of the important, positive roles that ants play in your garden. The ants, in fact, are eaten by other insects, spiders, frogs, lizards, birds, fish, and some mammals, forming an important part of food webs all over the world.

We are continually learning new ways that ants contribute to the ecosystem. Home gardeners can do worse than follow the biblical advice to observe the ant and be wise.

—Steven N. Handel and Christina M. K. Kaunzinger
conduct research at the Center for Urban Restoration Ecology
at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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10 PLANTS TO

Look past sedums and grasses for seasonal stars.
This mountain fleece-flower makes a bold statement that is hard to ignore.



FALL FOR

These out-of-the-ordinary options make the cool days of autumn more sweet than bitter

by Michelle Gervais

WHEN IT COMES to fall gardens, there's a standard palette of plants that we all rely on to add some punch and color as the season winds down: sedums, asters, ornamental grasses, garden mums, and pansies—all of which are readily available at your local mom-and-pop garden center. But if you dig a little deeper into your seed catalogs and search a little harder in the nursery aisles, you'll find a number of stunners that will keep your garden going full speed into autumn. The plants featured here have the potential to eclipse even your most magnificent stand of 'Autumn Joy' sedum. Who knows? Maybe you'll start to look forward to the end of the growing season.

Michelle Gervais is an associate editor.





A vigorous grower for damp areas

NAME: Mountain fleecflower (*Persicaria amplexicaulis* and cvs.)

USDA HARDINESS ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 4 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist soil

PEAK TIME: Midsummer to midfall

A plant that you won't see in every garden, mountain fleecflower is a vigorous grower that forms a substantial clump. It starts blooming in midsummer and keeps going into fall. Mountain fleecflowers are available in shades of white, pink, and red. 'Firetail' (pictured) is popular for its rosy red flowers. This plant appreciates ample moisture and is useful in a damp woodland garden or along streams, where it is stunning in a mass planting. Divide it in spring to stretch your patch.

Fiery flowers that last

NAME: Sneezeweed (*Helenium* spp. and cvs.)

ZONES: 4 to 8

SIZE: 2 to 5 feet tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; moist, well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Midsummer to midfall

While their foliage might be a bit nondescript in spring and summer, sneezeweeds make up for it later when their yellow, orange, and red blooms are the definition of fall. Countless cultivars are available these days, but perhaps one of the most popular is *H. autumnale* 'Moerheim Beauty' (pictured), with its coppery blooms that start in midsummer and last for up to 10 weeks. If you give sneezeweeds rich soil, they tend to flop and need staking, so put them in a spot that isn't too fertile.



A unique ground cover for any exposure

NAME: Kuma zasa bamboo grass (*Sasa veitchii*)

ZONES: 6 to 9

SIZE: Up to 3 feet tall, spreading indefinitely

CONDITIONS: Full sun to full shade; moist, fertile, well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Late summer through winter

For most of the growing season, kuma zasa bamboo grass has plain green leaves that form a carpet of intriguing texture. But as the days turn cooler, the leaf edges begin to dry and turn creamy white. At its peak, this plant looks extravagantly variegated, but it's just an illusion. The plant is evergreen in warmer zones, so the effect may dazzle you through winter and into spring, when the "variegated" leaves should be cut back to make way for new, all-green leaves. Keep in mind that this is a spreading bamboo. While it won't take over your garden in leaps and bounds, it does like to travel.

Unforgettable texture through the seasons

NAME: Threadleaf bluestar
(*Amsonia hubrichtii*)

ZONES: 5 to 8

SIZE: 3 feet tall and 4 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to light shade;
moist, well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Early to late fall

Threadleaf bluestar delivers not one but two seasons of spectacular interest. In late spring, the shoots of threadlike leaves are topped by clusters of starry, baby blue flowers. The foliage is lush for the rest of the season, offering a fine-textured cloud of green to act as a foil for bold leaves and flowers nearby. In fall, the plant turns into a stunning mass of brilliant yellow. This bluestar is native to the Southern Plains of the United States, so you know it's tough and low maintenance. But give it a few years to reach its full potential because a large clump makes the biggest impact. For fall-foliage color in a perennial, this plant tops the list.



An annual that keeps coming back

NAME: Purple perilla
(*Perilla frutescens** cvs.)

ZONES: Annual

SIZE: 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Summer though fall

Call me crazy for recommending purple perilla (if you grow it, you know what I mean), but it's simply a great plant. If you direct-sow seeds in your garden in fall or spring, you'll have hundreds of tiny, deep purple seedlings popping up in no time. Those seedlings quickly turn into bushy, dramatically dark plants, which fill the gaps in your beds magnificently from summer through the first frost. The problem is that once you plant perilla, it's yours forever because it self-sows prolifically. But perilla plays so well with others that you'll be tempted to leave more plants than you pull—and pulling them is easy. If you're nervous, keep it in check by pinching off the flowers as they start to form. Perilla makes a wonderful filler for late-summer and fall bouquets—and it's edible, too.

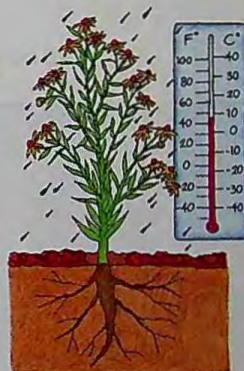


CULTURE TIP

3 Reasons fall is the time for planting

► THE RAIN RETURNS.

In most climates, dry summers give way to wet autumns, providing a more hospitable environment for establishing a plant.



► IT IS COOLER.

When the mercury drops, plants don't use up as much energy. The same is true of gardeners.

► THE SOIL IS COOLER, TOO. More rain and cooler temperatures mean a soil environment conducive to growing roots, which will help ensure that the plant makes it through winter.



Great foliage and a cloud of flower heads

NAME: Greater burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis* and cvs.)

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: Up to 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; fertile, consistently moist, well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Midsummer to midfall

Greater burnet provides an airy, playful scrim for late-season borders with its dense, dark flower spikes on airy, wiry stems that sway in the breeze above their intriguingly textured leaves. Often grown as an herb, greater burnet's attractive, blue-green leaves look like they've been cut with pinking shears; they add a subtle cucumber flavor to salads. The cultivar 'Tanna' (pictured) is a dwarf version of this useful plant, reaching only 18 to 24 inches tall.

A tough, beautiful, deer-resistant native

NAME: Turtlehead (*Chelone* spp. and cvs.)

ZONES: 3 to 9

SIZE: Up to 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, fertile soil

PEAK TIME: Late summer to midfall

Turtleheads are North American natives prized for their deep green foliage, snapdragon-like white or pink flowers, and tough constitutions. They thrive in moist to wet soil but will tolerate most garden conditions. The more moisture available to them, the more sun they can handle. Pinch the ends of turtlehead stems in spring to produce bushier plants and more flowers later in the season. Turtlehead foliage is bitter—hence, it is generally deer resistant. The plants are attractive, however, to butterflies. In fact, white turtlehead (*C. glabra*, pictured) is the sole host for the Baltimore checkerspot butterfly.



Plant this star for a fall-fireworks display

NAME: 'Fireworks' goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa* 'Fireworks')

ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: 2 to 4 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil

PEAK TIME: Late summer to midfall

'Fireworks' goldenrod is aptly named. In late summer, this nondescript, finely textured, shrublike perennial erupts into arching sprays of tiny yellow flowers. A cultivar of a southeastern United States native, this goldenrod is low maintenance and unattractive to deer. But it is attractive to butterflies and makes a wonderful cut flower.

Add an old-fashioned charmer to the back of the border

NAME: Kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate (*Persicaria orientalis*, syn. *Polygonum orientale**)

ZONES: Annual

SIZE: Up to 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist soil

PEAK TIME: Late summer through fall

It's not often you find a pendulous annual, and this one has nostalgic charm to spare. Perfect for the back of a cottage-garden border, kiss-me-over-the-garden-gate is a vigorous grower. With lots of sun and good garden soil, it will often top out at more than 6 feet and then bloom with draping ropes of rosy pink flowers, which look great hanging over a fence or mingling with others. The blooms also make an abundant, voluptuous addition to bouquets. This plant will reseed, but it generally isn't a nuisance.



A parade of gold throughout the season

NAME: Patrinia (*Patrinia scabiosifolia*)

ZONES: 5 to 8

SIZE: Up to 7 feet tall and 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; fertile, moist soil

PEAK TIME: Late summer through fall

Patrinia can be planted throughout a border to give the planting an airy accent. Above its low mound of foliage, patrinia shoots up tall corymbs of bright yellow flowers in summer, which fade as fall arrives, offering golden and buff hues. The flowering stems make great cut flowers. Patrinia is, unfortunately, an alternate host of the dreaded daylily rust, which is sweeping the country. If you or your neighbors love daylilies, you may want to think twice about introducing patrinia to your garden.

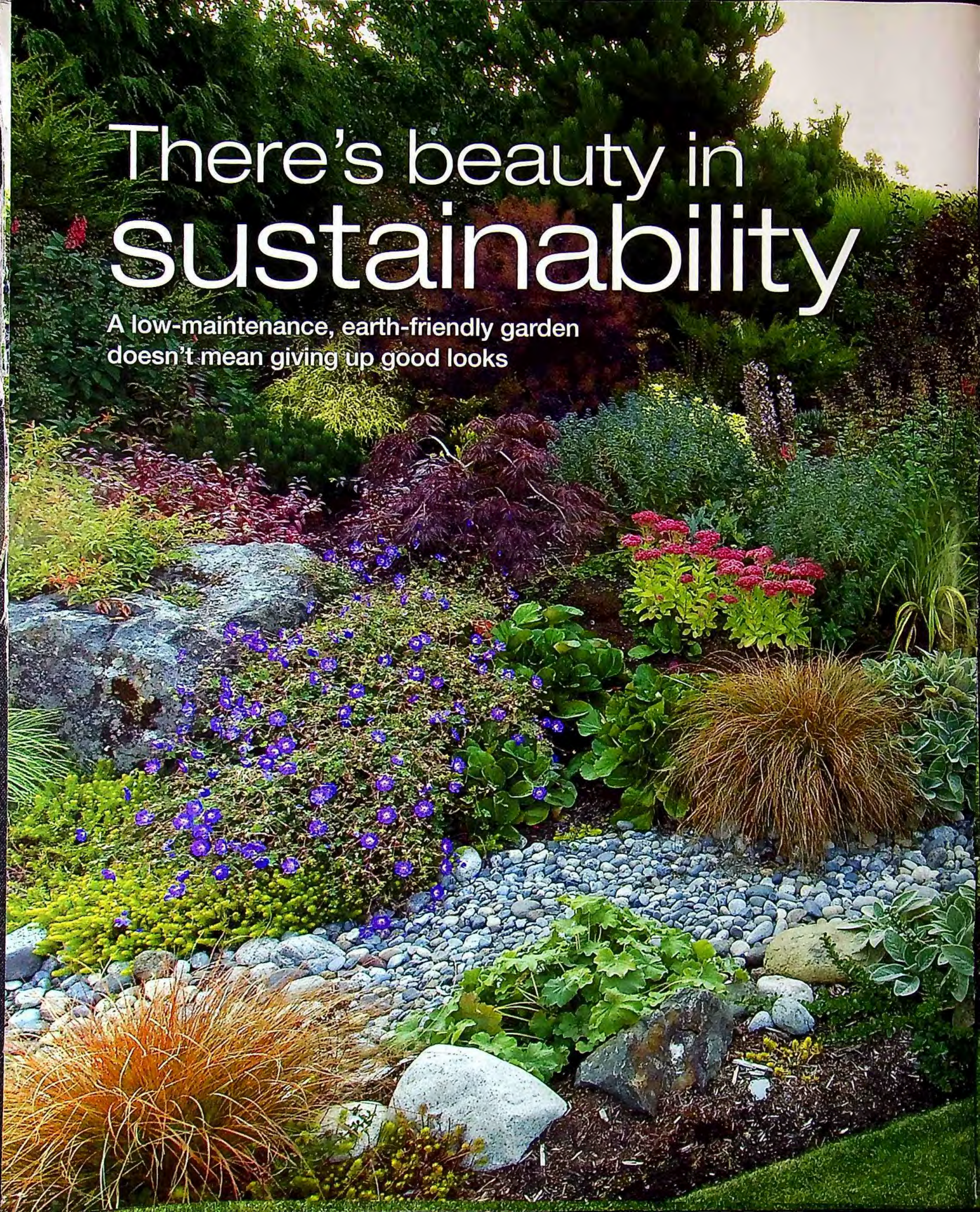
SOURCES

The following mail-order plant sellers offer the widest selection of the flowers featured:

- **AVANT GARDENS**, Dartmouth, Mass.; 508-998-8819; www.avantgardensne.com
- **BUSSE GARDENS**, Big Lake, Minn.; 800-544-3192; www.bussegardens.com
- **EARTHLY PURSUITS**, Windsor Mill, Md.; 410-496-2523; www.earthlypursuits.net
- **JOHNNY'S SELECTED SEEDS**, Winslow, Maine; 877-564-6697; www.johnnyseeds.com

There's beauty in sustainability

A low-maintenance, earth-friendly garden doesn't mean giving up good looks



by Stacie Crooks

ERASE YOUR FEARS of sustainable garden design, where your yard is turned into a time-consuming, boring expanse of bland plants. Contrary to popular belief, sustainable design can be gorgeous and simple. My goal as a designer is to emphasize how low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants and functional design elements create gardens just as beautiful as the high-maintenance gardens we all envision in our dreams. Recently, when a new client requested a sustainable landscape installation that also incorporated year-round beauty, color, and fragrance with as little maintenance as possible, I knew I had a unique opportunity to put these ideas to the test.



PLAN YOUR DREAM GARDEN

Sustainability paints a pretty picture

Creating a design that is easy on the eye, on you, and on the planet doesn't have to be complicated. Follow these simple steps to get you started.



Make drainage attractive

When it rains, it pours—and the water has to go somewhere. You can avoid swampy situations by installing a French drain, dressed up with a decorative rock streambed.

Get color without the fuss

Low-maintenance, drought-tolerant plants can be more attractive than you might think. Find reliable color in durable plants, like lavender and sedum.



Provide structure with evergreens

A few strategically placed conifers create a transition between the garden's edge and the forest, while also providing solid color and strong form all year long.

Factor the land into your design

Think first; bulldoze later. Instead of leveling the sloped lot, the designer placed this gazebo at the top of the hill, taking advantage of a marvelous view.

Use texture to soften the edges

Whether it's the strong shape of an evergreen or the sharp edge of a path, soft-textured plants, like grasses, help smooth the way.

Incorporating sustainable practices, preserving natural elements in the landscape, and introducing native and like-climate plants are key elements used on this property that can be applied to any design plan where your goal is beauty and sustainability with a hands-off maintenance theme.

WORK WITH YOUR SITE TO ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK

The key to creating a beautiful and functional sustainable landscape starts with preparation. A good design incorporates the natural lay of the land in the planning, making alterations only where necessary. The more you ignore the natural structure of the landscape or make unnecessary changes, the more drainage, soil, and other environmental issues will become a concern.

Proper drainage—ensuring that sufficient water is retained and the rest flows away—is one of the most important issues on any site. A French drain is a practical means of dealing with runoff on properties with a downhill grade and is especially important for city lots where runoff can collect and carry chemicals and toxins, redepositing them throughout your landscape. As functional as it is, though, a French drain isn't always something you want to look at. The French drain that runs through this property (photo, facing page), however, provides a surprising opportunity for introducing seasonal appeal. I designed a tumbling, dry-rock streambed to camouflage the drain, thus creating year-long visual interest with this subtly curving pseudostream.

The French drain solves some of the drainage concerns, but hardscaped areas, like patios and walkways, also need attention. To prevent flooding and to allow water to seep back into the ground for thirsty plants, I set cut stone in permeable sand to provide drainage (photos, pp. 38 and 39). Natural Pennsylvania bluestone and flagstone—a more cost-effective alternative—are great options for patios and walkways because of their natural coloration, allowing them to blend easily into a setting.

Aside from drainage, one of the biggest challenges for this garden was that it needed to survive on 20 inches of rainfall a year, similar to parts of the world such as Australia, Chile, South Africa, and the Mediterranean—where winters are wet and summers are bone-dry. Of course, natives are the first plants to come to mind. But you can expand your plant palette without sacrificing sustainability. Branch out by including plants from similar climates and landscapes around the world (just be sure to check

Let sustainability lead the way.

When it comes to plant choices, low maintenance and adaptability are the first considerations. Then factor in eye-catching elements, like seasonal color and texture.



Make a jaw-dropping entrance with climate-friendly plants and a puddle-free patio set in sand. You'll never tire of showing off a sustainable design this beautiful.



DESIGN TIP



KEEP DEER AT BAY with fragrant plants

In a sustainable design, consider plant selections that do double duty. 'Tuscan Blue' rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Tuscan Blue', Zones 8–11), 'Walker's Low' catmint (*Nepeta × faassenii* 'Walker's Low', Zones 4–8), and several varieties of lavender (*Lavandula* spp. and cvs., Zones 5–9) add color and fragrance to the landscape while doubling as natural deer repellents.

invasive-plant lists). These like-climate plants will willingly adapt to the local conditions, tolerate drought more readily, and dramatically cut down on maintenance.

ADD APPEAL WITH TEXTURE AND SEASONAL COLOR

Once you plan out the technical elements of a sustainable design, then the fun part begins: selecting the plants. But not just any native or like-climate plants will do. Narrow your choices by looking for plants that will add year-round structure and texture as well as seasonal color.

Evergreen plants create the basic structure of an eye-popping sustainable garden, supplying interest and appeal throughout the year while providing the skeleton to build your plantings around. Some of my favorites are mugo pines (*Pinus mugo* and cvs., USDA Hardiness Zones 3–7); 'Mops' false cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Mops', Zones 4–8); evergreen natives, such as sword ferns (*Polystichum munitum*, Zones 3–8); and salal (*Gaultheria shallon*, Zones 6–8).

Once resilient evergreen plants establish the framework of the garden, you need to add texture. This essential plant characteristic works to soften the strong forms of the evergreens. I think of the drought-tolerant 'Cappuccino' New Zealand hair sedge (*Carex tenuiculmis* 'Cappuccino', Zones 7–9) as the little black dress of the garden because of its

unique ability to provide supple texture while blending in with any collection of plants. I use this sedge and the similarly low-maintenance blue oat grass (*Helictotrichon sempervirens*, Zones 4–9) to tone down not only the harshness of evergreens but also the sharp edges of patios and pathways.

In addition to texture, seasonal color is important for providing balance and interest. I start spring off, for example, with the sweet smell of evergreen sarcococca (*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*, Zones 6–9) and the white flowers of David viburnum (*Viburnum davidii*, Zones 7–9), which continues to provide interest through summer with its dark navy berries. Native vine maples (*Acer circinatum*, Zones 6–9) surround the back of the gazebo, providing a large screen of fiery fall color. Reflected light from the foliage of native evergreens brightens the darkness of winter days.

The strong structure of evergreens mixed with the texture and color of plants well suited to the climate take this sustainable garden from simply practical to beautiful. Planning the design around the natural landscape and the local climate results in a low-maintenance garden that shows off a range of vibrant colors and strong forms throughout the seasons. ♡

Stacie Crooks is a garden designer in Seattle, Washington.



What's your composting style?

Consider time, space, and effort when choosing which is right for you *by Lynn Bement*

EVERYBODY KNOWS what happens to those large piles of autumn leaves we build on our lawns: If we don't put them in bags right away, they get smaller and smaller until, after not too many months, there isn't much left. No mystery here. The same thing happens in the woods when the leaves fall from the trees. When living things die, they decompose. As a gardener, it didn't take me long to appreciate and adopt nature's lesson of turning waste into sweet-smelling, rich brown compost.

Over time, adding good-quality compost to your garden provides nutrients in a form that plants can use; enriches soil health and enhances the soil food web; builds soil structure; improves drainage; creates more water-holding ability in soil, which means less watering; and acts as a buffer to toxins. Not to mention, it's free plant food. With very little effort, just about anything can contribute to a mineral- and microbe-rich compost: fruit and vegetable scraps, tea bags, coffee grounds and filters, eggshells, and even dog hair. Time is the only other necessary ingredient.

Composting is easy, but with several options available, you will have to consider a few factors. You'll want to pick a method based on your needs and the space available. But you don't need to worry about filling the composter you choose. Because organic matter is constantly breaking down and changing in volume and you're harvesting finished compost, you'll most likely never fill the entire bin. If you're an impatient person or want compost as soon as possible, you'll need to choose a method that allows you to hot-compost (sidebar, p. 42). Perhaps the most important decision is considering how much time you're able to invest. Once you choose the method that's right for you and create the right conditions, you can let nature do the hard work of breaking down your organic matter and turning it into vibrant compost.



CLOSED BINS keep compost neat and tidy

Closed bins are usually made from recycled plastic and can come in different shapes—from square to cylindrical. All options have a lid to cover the container. These bins are a good cold-composting choice for urban and suburban locations. They do, however, present some difficulties. They cannot be used for hot composting, for example, because the closed bin makes it difficult to maintain the required temperature. The containers also hold a limited volume of material. Plus, harvesting can be challenging because the openings are only about 1 foot above soil level. To make the job easier, you can move the entire unit to another spot. These bins typically have no bottom, so the compost materials will drop out when you lift the bin. Fork what is at the top of the compost pile into the new bin location, and harvest what has decomposed on the bottom. Closed bins typically run between \$50 and \$250. Municipalities sometimes offer this version to residents at a reasonable cost.

Pros

- Good for small spaces because of their size and appearance

Cons

- Harder to harvest materials
- Turning is difficult

- Cannot do hot composting
- Volume is limited

\$ Cost

- \$50 to \$250

PIT COMPOSTING suits no-fuss gardeners

For pit composting, holes or trenches are dug to bury your waste. After that, you sit back and forget about it, while the organic materials gradually break down over a period of six months to a year. This method is effective for those who want their decomposing organic matter to be completely out of sight. The trench is also a good place to stick those weedy plants you have pulled up. If buried deep enough, the weed seeds will not see the light of day, so they won't resprout. The hole or trench is awkward to harvest, though, so it is probably best used to enrich an area you ultimately want to plant in. This method comes at no cost but requires extra labor for digging.



Pros

- Can be sited where you plan to make a new planting bed or garden
- Materials are out of sight
- Requires no construction and minimal labor
- No turning is necessary
- Holds as much organic matter as you have
- Good for any area

Cons

- Takes six months to a year before matter breaks down
- Cannot harvest the compost
- Cannot do hot composting

\$ Cost

- \$0

continued on page 42 ➤

Do you like your compost hot...

Temperatures rising in a hot-compost pile come from the activity of numerous organisms breaking down organic matter. To keep a pile running hot, pay attention to four elements: carbon, nitrogen, water, and air.

2 PARTS CARBON

Includes "brown" items like:

- autumn leaves
- wood chips
- shredded paper

1 PART NITROGEN

Includes "green" items like:

- grass clippings
- fruit and vegetable waste
- animal manure (but no pet or human waste)

A hot pile requires enough high-nitrogen materials to get the pile to heat up. The ratio by volume should be 2 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen. To aid in decomposition, keep the mixture as damp as a wrung-out sponge but not sopping wet. A variety of different-size materials (like twigs, stalks, straw, or hay) creates air pockets. You also increase the air/oxygen exchange every time you turn the pile.

If the pile is built correctly, it will heat up within 24 to 36 hours to the ideal temperature of 141°F to 155°F (weed seeds and disease pathogens die at these temperatures) and will maintain its temperature for several days to a week or longer. Use a compost thermometer to monitor the temperature. If the temperature starts to drop or if it gets hotter than 160°F, turn the pile again and add water. This should be done several times. A hot pile takes more effort but will produce compost more quickly—in several weeks to several months.



STARTING OFF
The first bin holds fresh materials ready for composting.

BREAKING DOWN
Materials are moved to the second bin to keep things running hot and decomposing fast.

READY TO GO
Materials finish composting in the last bin.

OPEN BINS make hot composting simple

Open bins are an excellent way to do hot or cold composting, which makes this option my favorite. These types of bins typically use either wire fencing or wood to create a neat, structured area to stockpile your organic matter. The openness of the bin (or bins) allows for easy turning and harvesting of materials (especially if you have removable front pieces) and for air to enter and circulate, speeding up decomposition. The bins are easy to build and can accommodate large volumes. Having multiple bins allows the easy transfer of materials from one bin to another when hot composting. Open bins also keep compost materials tidy and partially hidden from view, making the area less of an eyesore for you and your neighbors. Cost, however, can vary. The least expensive open bin is a single unit made from stakes and wire fencing or poultry netting, costing roughly \$25 for materials, plus a few hours of labor to construct it. The ultimate three-bin system (the Cadillac of composters for hot composting) is approximately 12 feet long and 4 feet wide with each compartment being 4 feet square. It can run between \$500 and \$2,000 to construct. Your total cost may vary depending on whether you use recycled-plastic lumber or wood.

Pros

- Simple to construct
- Holds large amounts of organic matter
- Good for hot composting
- Materials are tidy and partially hidden
- Easy to turn materials and harvest compost
- One-bin system fits in most areas

Cons

- Can be expensive
- Compost isn't completely hidden
- Three-bin system requires a lot of space

\$ Cost

- One-bin system: \$25 and up
- Three-bin system: \$500 to \$2,000



...or cold?

This method of composting requires minimal effort but may take a year or two before it produces compost you can use in your garden.

A cold pile has two steps: Put your waste in a pile, and wait. You can think of cold composting as the add-as-you-have-materials pile. The time needed to have finished compost is hard to estimate because it depends on the materials in your pile and the size of the particles. The smaller the particles, the faster they will break down. Do not put in weeds that have gone to seed or diseased plants. Without high temperatures to kill off weed seeds or disease pathogens, you will be spreading these bad guys around your landscape.



TUMBLERS ease the burden of turning

Tumblers are usually made out of plastic and are a good solution for those who desire a less labor-intensive method. As closed units that keep materials out of sight, they're also good for urban and small suburban areas. These units are attached to a support structure that raises them slightly above the ground so that the whole unit can be turned either with a handle or by hand. Homemade versions can be made from a 55-gallon drum or a plastic garbage can with a tight-fitting lid. Tumblers are better used for cold composting; they are not a reliable method for hot composting because it is difficult—if not impossible—to reach and maintain the necessary temperature for killing weed seeds and disease pathogens within the volume available. Because there is no contact with the ground, you should add a shovelful of soil to the mix to increase the diversity of microbial life, which aids in breaking down organic matter. Tumblers do have a limited volume, and compost can be difficult to harvest. Cost typically runs between \$15 and \$225.

👍 Pros

- Good for small spaces because of their size and appearance
- Easy to turn materials

👎 Cons

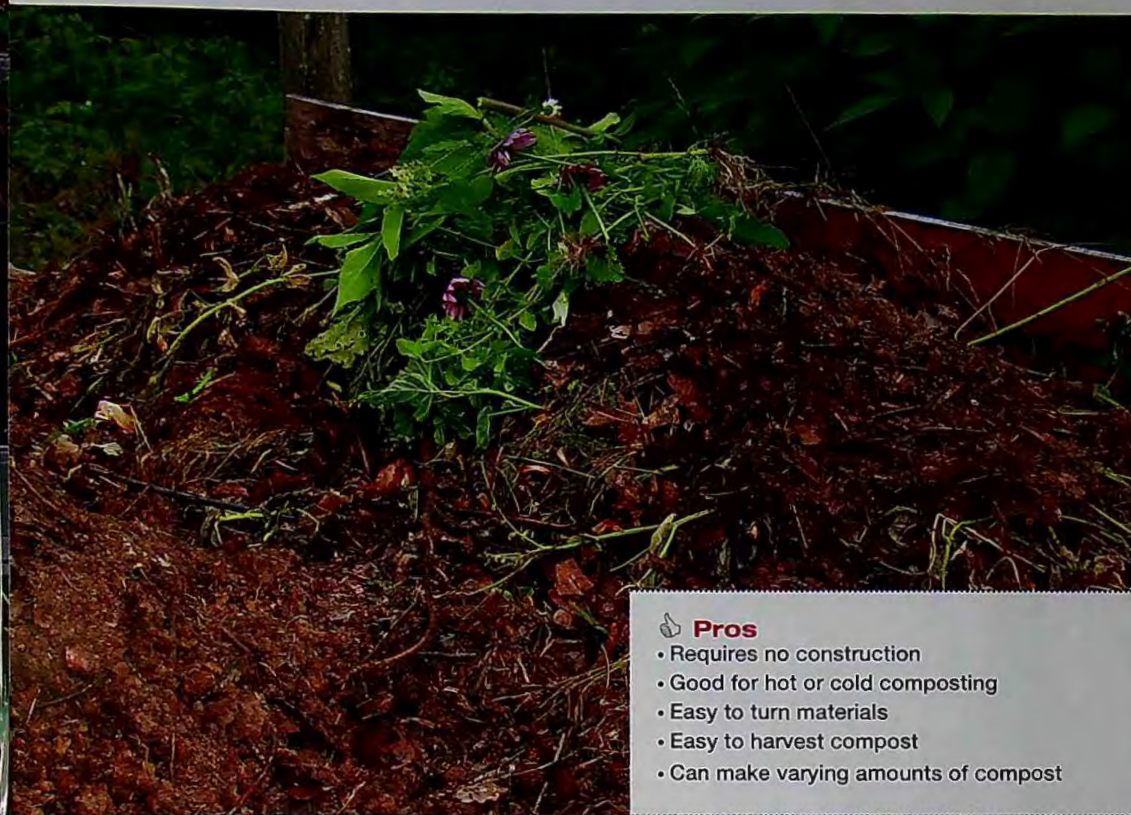
- Harder to harvest compost
- Volume is limited
- Cannot do hot composting

\$ Cost

- \$15 to \$225



What's your composting style?



PILING produces big rewards with zero cost

Piling is a method that sounds exactly like what it is: a heap of mixed, compostable materials. It does not require any additional materials—other than a pitchfork for turning—and the openness of the pile makes that task easy. Piling is another great option for hot and cold composting. It is, however, less desirable in small urban and suburban locations, unless you are able to camouflage the materials from view with a skillful garden design. Piles work in larger landscapes, but do not build them higher than 5 feet tall: They might collapse on themselves and, thereby, lose air pockets that help speed up the composting process.

Pros

- Requires no construction
- Good for hot or cold composting
- Easy to turn materials
- Easy to harvest compost
- Can make varying amounts of compost

Cons

- Not desirable in small spaces because of its appearance

Cost

- \$0



VERMICOMPOSTING makes the most of small spaces

Vermicomposting uses worms to do the work—you just need to bury your food waste under moistened bedding material. The bedding is made from shredded paper, dead leaves, or straw. It is an excellent option for those living in apartments or other small spaces. Depending on what region of the country you live in, it can be done outdoors, in your basement, or in an attached garage. It can also be done in a 15-gallon container kept under the kitchen sink. Worms are amazing little workers. Red wigglers (*Eisenia fetida*) are best suited for home composting. They are comfortable living in an opaque box filled with bedding material, and will reproduce and happily eat your food waste. Worm castings are a rich, desirable amendment for everything in your garden. There are several options for harvesting the finished compost. One of the simplest methods is to move all of the contents to one side of the bin, adding fresh, moistened bedding material and fresh food waste to the empty side. The worms will migrate over to the newer bedding over a period of several weeks, and you can harvest the finished side—worm-free. When vermicomposting, however, you'll need to keep all food scraps buried to keep fruit flies from becoming a nuisance.

Pros

- Materials are tidy
- Good indoors or for small spaces
- Easy to do in winter

Cons

- Bedding material needs to be kept moist
- Fruit flies can be a problem if food waste is not buried under the bedding or if you are feeding the worms too much food

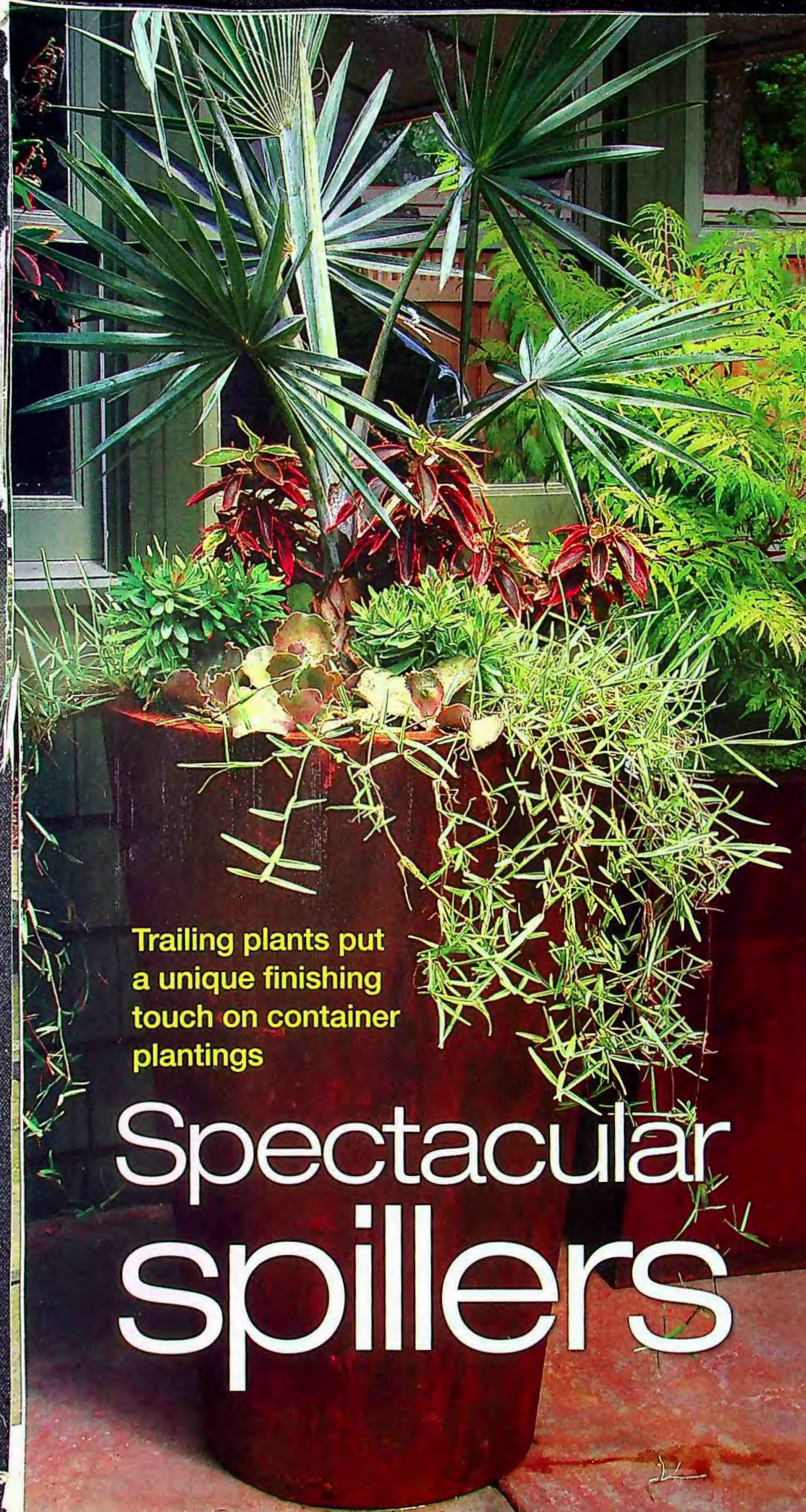
Cost

- \$20 and up

Lynn Bement, self-professed "Compost Queen," is a former University of Illinois master gardener, a Michigan State University master composter, and a certified soil food web advisor.



To see a how-to video on composting, go to www.finegardening.com



Trailing plants put
a unique finishing
touch on container
plantings

Spectacular spillers

by Michelle Gervais

I GO INTO a plant-buying frenzy when I'm designing my containers. I have to have interesting specimens, like red Abyssinian banana (*Ensete ventricosum* 'Maurelii', USDA Hardiness Zones 9–11) and tropical smoke bush (*Euphorbia cotinifolia*, Zones 9–11), as thrillers and a bazillion different colorful coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides* cvs., Zone 11) as fillers, but when it comes to spillers, I have trouble breaking out of the sweet-potato-vine box. Besides, sweet potato vines (*Ipomoea batatas* cvs., Zone 11) are a feast for ground-hogs and slugs on my patio, and they resemble Swiss cheese by July—if they even make it that far into the season. And while vinca vines (*Vinca major** and cvs., Zones 7–9) are the spiller of choice for the majority of the population, I just can't seem to make it work in my combos. So I have made it my mission to find out-of-the-ordinary spillers that will turn my mere plantings into artistic creations. Here are eight spectacular plants that have risen to the top of the heap.

Michelle Gervais, an associate editor, tends her containers in New Milford, Connecticut.

continued on page 46 ➡

*See invasive alert on page 16.

Purpleheart is an old-fashioned gem

NAME: *Tradescantia pallida*
'Purpurea'

ZONES: 8 to 11

SIZE: Up to 6 inches tall, trailing to 2 feet

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade

Purpleheart is a beloved, ancient houseplant that we're seeing in garden settings more and more. It can be thrilling as an annual ground cover, but it really shines as a container player. The dusky matte purple stems and strappy leaves are coarse and striking, and the perfect foil for finer green foliage and pink or yellow flowers. As a matter of fact, purpleheart has pink flowers, borne along the stems amid the foliage—a charming bonus. At the end of the season, dig this plant up and bring it inside, or take cuttings that root in the blink of an eye in a glass of water on the windowsill.



Use variegated St. Augustine grass as a delicate frill

NAME: *Stenotaphrum secundatum* 'Variegatum'

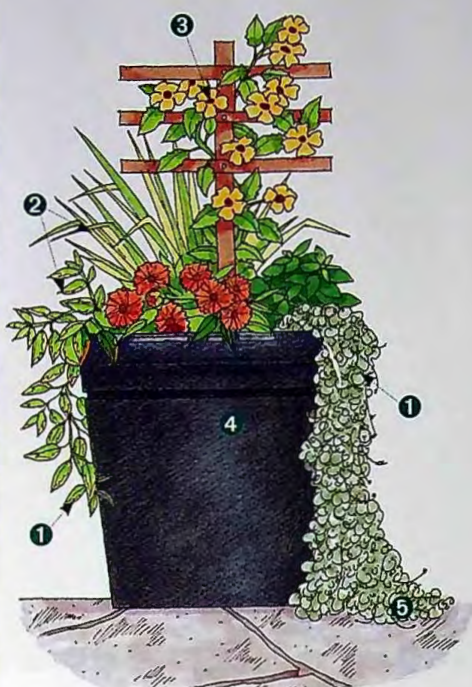
ZONES: 9 to 11

SIZE: 6 inches tall, trailing to 3 feet

CONDITIONS: Full sun

At first glance, you might think that this trailing grass is nothing special, but the white stripes on its every-which-way blades make quite a splash when the plant really gets going in a container (photo, p. 45). This tough grass plays nicely with other variegated plants and solid greens alike. But if you live in a warm climate, don't let it out of your sight—it can become aggressive if allowed to escape its pot.

DESIGN TIP



Put your spillers TO WORK

- ① Use more than one spiller in the same planting to create a lush, dynamic effect.
- ② Take advantage of variegation by pairing a flashy spiller with a coordinating flower.
- ③ Train vigorous spillers to go up, which helps tie the planting together.
- ④ Pair a dark pot with a bright spiller to heighten the drama.
- ⑤ Let spillers flow into paths and onto patios to blur the line between garden and hardscape.

Variegated potato vine packs a golden punch

NAME: *Solanum jasminoides* 'Variegata'

ZONES: 9 to 11

SIZE: Up to 1 foot tall, trailing to 3 feet

CONDITIONS: Full sun



The golden leaf margins on this perennial vine are the perfect companion to hot-colored annuals, like verbenas (*Verbena* × *hybrida* cvs.) and red petunias (*Petunia* cvs.). This is a dense plant that forms a significant mass in a container. In fall, the starry white to pale blue flowers are replaced by shiny black fruit. In warm climates, it might be evergreen.



▲ Walkabout Sunset® lysimachia has the Midas touch

NAME: *Lysimachia congestiflora* Walkabout Sunset®

ZONES: 7 to 11

SIZE: 1 foot tall, trailing to 1 foot

CONDITIONS: Full sun

This new lysimachia is like sunshine in a pot, from its sun-splashed leaves to its cheery golden flowers, which bloom from spring through midsummer. Pair it with an electric blue pot for a perfect contrast, and perhaps add a dark cordyline, like 'Purple Tower' (*Cordyline australis* 'Purple Tower', Zones 10–11), to accent its reddish stems.



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▲ Parrot's beak straddles both sides of the color wheel

NAME: *Lotus berthelotii*

ZONES: 9 to 11

SIZE: 8 inches tall, trailing to 2 feet

CONDITIONS: Full sun



The finely textured, gray-green foliage of parrot's beak is like a frothy skirt of tulle for your container. It begs to be paired with blues, purples, and a rosy red, but be careful: Starting in midsummer, this cool foliage occasionally sports beaklike orange to scarlet flowers (above), which can throw your carefully planned cool-color scheme for a loop. This one takes some experimenting to use successfully, but it's worth the effort. This contradictory plant manages to look like a refined aristocrat and a crazed party animal within one season.

SOURCES

The following mail-order plant sellers offer the widest selection of the spillers featured:

- **AVANT GARDENS**, Dartmouth, Mass.; 508-998-8819; www.avantgardensne.com
- **COTTAGE GARDEN**, Piasa, Ill.; 618-729-4324; www.cottgardens.com
- **GLASSHOUSE WORKS**, Stewart, Ohio; 800-837-2142; www.glasshouseworks.com



Conifers

by Christine Froehlich

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, my husband and I relocated from Connecticut to the shores of Lake Ontario. I brought along a few truckloads of my favorite perennials and happily plunked them into the backyard, creating an instant garden that I could see from our living-room window. I didn't think about winter, and when it hit, I wasn't happy.

It snowed endlessly that year, and the white fence enclosing my new garden stared back at me accusingly, begging for a better solution. Because going south for the winter wasn't part of the plan, I decided to invest in some conifers to jazz up the view. But spring brought some problems I hadn't considered. The site had more shade and many more tree roots than I had originally thought.

Fortunately, dwarf conifers tend to be shade tolerant because they push their new growth earlier in the spring (before the deciduous trees really leaf out) and need less photosynthesis to remain happy. Many variegated conifers will burn out in the afternoon sun, and they appreciate shady conditions to keep their striking colors brilliant. Surprisingly, even a couple of reported sun lovers perform better in some degree of shade. Here are some conifers that have proven to be standouts in the shade.

MOUNDING FORMS FILL IN GAPS

Conifers with a mounding habit usually have a fluffy texture, adding softness to the garden. These shrubs can have a loose branching structure or a creeping growth pattern, but either way, they fill in the middle ground between taller trees and the ground layer. Not all medium-size, mounding conifers will grow in the shade, but some do.

Don't confuse **Emerald Spreader™ Japanese yew** (*Taxus cuspidata** 'Monloo') with those overgrown blobs flanking foundations across the country. This prostrate grower is far handsomer than those yews commonly used for hedging. Its small, dense, dark green needles and low, spreading habit set Emerald Spreader™ apart. It can be used as a billowy ground cover (quickly reaching its maximum size of 3 feet tall and 9 feet wide) and helps

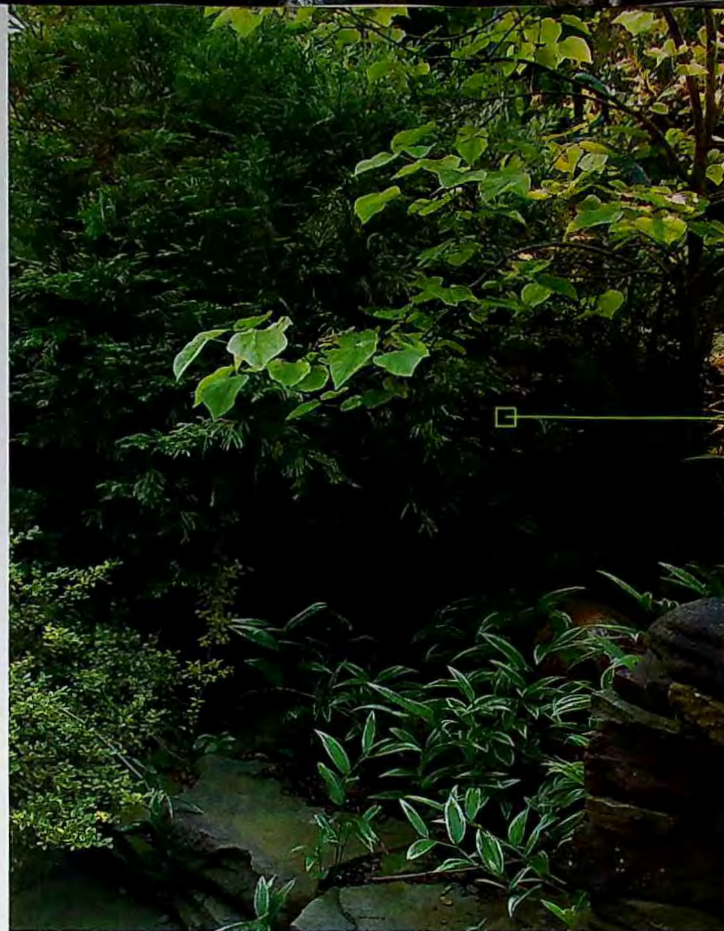
'Snow' false
cypress



FOR SHADE

Who knew there were any?
And who knew they could be this cool?

Evergreens make excellent neighbors. For year-round good looks that complement almost everything, try shade-tolerant evergreens, like Emerald Spreader™ Japanese yew (USDA Hardiness Zones 5-7).



Variegated elkhorn cedar ■ Zones 5-7

add depth, texture, and contrast to the garden floor. Emerald Spreader™ does not like root competition, so it usually does best when planted in dense shade under trees with deep root systems, like tulip poplars (*Liriodendron tulipifera*, Zones 4-9). Deer like to graze most yews, so take the proper precautions.

I sometimes find mounded shapes difficult to work with because of their loose habit, but the bold presence of **variegated elkhorn cedar** (*Thujaopsis dolabrata* 'Nana Variegata') lends itself to a variety of uses. It makes an impressive focal point and looks equally good integrated with other low-growing conifers and perennials. Its moderate size (6 feet tall and 4 feet wide, growing 3 to 4 inches per year) is nothing special, but the bright green-and-white foliage is strong yet delicate. Deer will nibble on its bright white tips, so offer it some sort of protection. Partial shade and moist, well-drained soil are best.

If you want a conifer that is subtle but has an arresting presence, '**Snow**' false cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Snow') is one worth trying. This shrub is slow growing, putting on only a few inches per year and eventually reaching only 6 feet tall and wide. The best attribute of 'Snow' is its loosely rounded shape accented by delicate gray-green foliage that is lightly frosted with white. The fuzzy appearance of this conifer will make you want to hug it. For the best variegation, keep it in



CULTURE TIP

Let the light shine through

If you want to let a bit more sun into your shady nook, try raising the leaf canopy by pruning your deciduous trees up to 25 feet off the ground. It's a big project, but you'll widen the array of conifers you can plant by allowing more filtered sunlight through.



'Gentsch White' hemlock ■ Zones 4–8

partial shade and well-drained soil. One word of caution: Deer love all *Chamaecyparis*, so be sure to protect this beauty.

Hemlocks perform especially well in shade, but only certain varieties are immune to the woolly adelgid, a tree-killing bug. I love **'Gentsch White' hemlock** (*Tsuga canadensis* 'Gentsch White') because the new growth is white in the shade, giving it a frosted look, and because it stays pest-free. 'Gentsch White' provides stark contrast to dark greens, and it lights up any shady corner. Its small, 4-foot-tall by 4-foot-wide stature allows it to fit under taller trees or shrubs. Expect it to put on 1 to 3 inches of growth each year. As with most shade-loving conifers, hemlocks prefer a little morning sun and well-drained soil.

UPRIGHT HABITS CATCH THE EYE

When many of us think of conifers, we think of towering trees. This can be the case, but there are a number of great shade-loving choices that have an upright habit without getting 50 feet tall. The vertical lines of these trees are eye-catching, so if you need a focal point, this is the group for you.

One of these pyramidal options is **'Joe Kozey' Japanese umbrella pine** (*Sciadopitys verticillata* 'Joe Kozey', top photo, p. 54). It has rubberlike needles and an intense yellow color in the shade. It grows moderately—putting on only 4 to 6 inches of new growth each year, reaching just 6 feet tall and a mere 3 feet wide at maturity, so it can fit into any-size garden. Deer tend to avoid this tree when other options

'Snow' false cypress ■ Zones 4–8

are available. For the best success, site 'Joe Kozey' in moist but well-drained soil and partial shade.

Like 'Joe Kozey', '**Silberlocke' Korean fir** (*Abies koreana* 'Silberlocke') has a compact, vertical habit that makes it good for small gardens, like mine. It can eventually get 20 feet tall and wide but is fairly slow growing, only adding 6 inches a year. The silvery backside of its needles gives it an icy appearance that lights up the shade. 'Silberlocke' is another good option for those with deer problems because deer usually steer clear of this particular fir. It prefers some morning sun and mostly afternoon shade. To keep it happy, be sure your soil is well drained.

I have long admired many of the gold-variegated false cypresses but don't have room to grow them. Thankfully, **golden dwarf hinoki cypress** (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Nana Lutea') is a slower-growing (putting on about 1 inch of new growth a year), shorter variety. Over time, it will only get 3 to 5 feet tall and wide. The delicate, golden-tipped foliage and twisted branches stand out handsomely, especially in winter. As with 'Snow' false cypress,



'Joe Kozey' Japanese umbrella pine ■ Zones 5–9



'Silberlocke' Korean fir ■ Zones 5–8



To see videos on pruning conifers, go to www.finegardening.com



Golden dwarf hinoki cypress ■ Zones 4–8

DESIGN TIP



Balance size and accentuate colors

Be sure to plant shade-loving conifers that will stay within the scale of the existing trees on your site. If you have smaller, deciduous shade trees, don't plant a conifer that is going to tower over its buddies. Accent the foliage of your conifers by planting them with perennials that have contrasting or complementary hues.



Dragon's eye pine ■ Zones 4–7

this tree belongs to a genus that the deer love to eat.

Dragon's eye pine (*Pinus densiflora* 'Oculus-draconis') is a conversation piece like no other. The dark green eye that emerges from the center of the variegated yellow-and-green needles illuminates the garden and provides exceptional contrast. Dragon's eye pine can reach 15 to 20 feet tall and wide, growing only 4 to 6 inches a year, if given ideal conditions (filtered shade and moist, well-drained soil). This tree is best when pruned to give it a lower profile, making the dark green eye more visible as you walk by. And although deer might munch on them occasionally, pines are generally not the first item on the deer buffet menu.

I've found that once you start planting conifers, it's hard to stop. There seems to be no end to the exciting color and texture interests they provide. And while winters here haven't improved much, the view from my window into the back garden certainly has. ~

Christine Froehlich, executive director of the Rochester Civic Garden Center in Rochester, New York, is always adding some new conifers to her shady backyard.

SOURCES

The following mail-order plant sellers offer the widest selection of the conifers featured:

- **FORESTFARM**, Williams, Ore.; 541-846-7269; www.forestfarm.com
- **LAZY S'S FARM NURSERY**, 2360 Spotswood Trail, Barboursville, VA 22923; www.lazyssfarm.com
- **SISKIYOU RARE PLANT NURSERY**, Talent, Ore.; 541-535-7103; www.siskiyourareplantnursery.com
- **YELLOWWOOD RARE PLANTS**, Zanesville, Ohio; 888-442-1600; www.yellowwoodrareplants.com



Heal your hands with herbal balms

Make a soothing, all-natural moisturizer for garden-worn skin

by the editors of Fine Gardening

TO A DIEHARD GARDENER, rough, beaten hands are a badge of honor. But by the time fall rolls around, enough is enough. The garden is put to bed, and your body is tired. It's time to rejuvenate, and what better way to soothe your battered skin and chapped lips than with a homemade balm scented with herbs from your garden?

The ingredients are relatively inexpensive, so you can afford to experiment with different combinations of herbs and essential oils. It's all natural, too, with simple ingredients that you can pronounce and that you can find in your local health-food store. Making an herbal balm is a great winter project and a wonderful way to enjoy the bounty of your garden.

What you need

YIELDS ENOUGH TO FILL FOUR 4-OUNCE JELLY JARS.

2 cups light olive oil

1 cup dried herbs, such as lavender, rosemary, mint, lemon verbena, or chamomile

15 to 20 drops essential oil

1¼ cups grated beeswax



DIRECTIONS:

- 1. Gently heat the olive oil and herbs** in the top of a double boiler over simmering water for about 15 minutes. For this batch, we're using dried lavender and chamomile.
- 2. Strain the oil** into a small bowl, and discard the herbs. Return the oil to the double boiler.
- 3. Add the essential oil.** Lavender oil will give this blend a pungent kick. The oil you choose, however, doesn't have to match your herb.
- 4. Melt the beeswax** in the oil mixture until it disappears completely. Grating the beeswax first makes this step lightning fast.
- 5. Test the consistency** by dipping a spoon into the mixture and letting it set away from the heat for a few minutes. If it's too soft, add more beeswax; if it's too hard, add more olive oil.
- 6. Pour the warm balm** into clean jars, and let it harden. Cap the jars after the balm has cooled. Enjoy!



DESIGN TIP

Dress it up!

Homemade herbal balms make thoughtful gifts. Search out fancy jars and tins, then decorate them with cloth, paper, raffia, or hand-printed labels to personalize your creations.



To see how to make an herbal balm from scratch, go to www.finegardening.com

Web
EXTRA



Set the mood with grasses

When used the right way, these magnificent plants can be relaxing, mysterious, or dramatic



▲ **There's not much that grasses can't do.** Whether they're adding a sense of serenity, providing contrast, or acting like a wall, as with this 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis* × *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', USDA Hardiness Zones 5–9), these plants are beautiful and versatile.

by Danielle Sherry

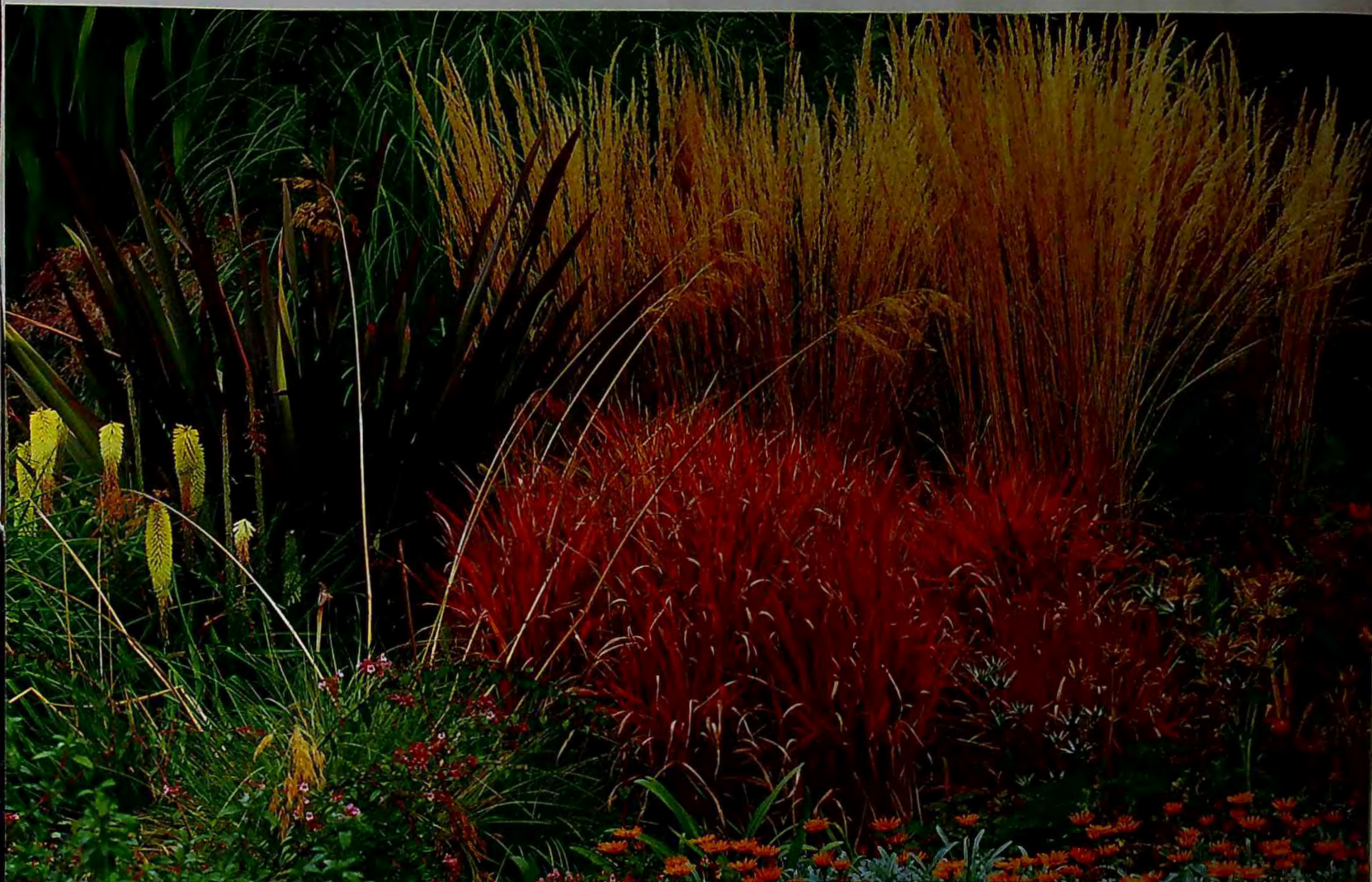
GRASSES ARE ESSENTIAL garden plants. They take their time emerging in spring, but once the weather warms, it's hard to imagine what life would be like without them. They add texture and movement to the landscape and give you multiple seasons of interest. Ornamental grasses come in all shapes and sizes, and there are options for shade and sun—making it possible for everyone to have at least a few. Add that they are ridiculously easy to care for, and there's really nothing to dislike about these wonderful plants.

Perhaps one of the best attributes of grasses is their design versatility. Their fluffy texture can be calming, especially when a breeze gently blows through them. Grasses can also provide a dramatic contrast to bolder plants by highlighting the texture, color, or form of garden counterparts. And don't forget that their see-through quality allows them to act like a pair of sheer curtains—distorting your view just enough to be intriguing. Whatever effect you're hoping to achieve in your own space, grasses are worth the investment.

Danielle Sherry is an associate editor.

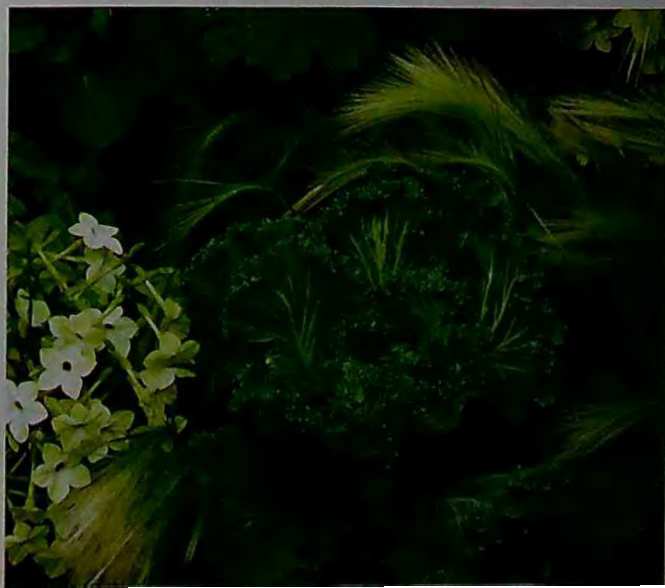
[Add a little drama]

Contrast is exciting, and the wide variety of grasses means that they can make any planting come alive. They are great for drawing attention to the texture, color, or form of other plants. Plant a wispy grass next to a plant with large, fleshy leaves, or choose a variety with a brilliant hue to provide a color contrast when paired with more subdued tones.



▲ **Pump up the color.** 'Hercules' miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis* var. *purpurascens** 'Hercules', Zones 4–9) adds a bold punch of color to this combo with its fiery orange blades. The light inflorescences of 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass also help balance out the dark spots in this vignette.

► **Accentuate other textures.** The star of this combination is the ornamental cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* cv., annual), but it would not stand out nearly as much without the contrasting texture of the fuzzy foxtail barley (*Hordeum jubatum*, Zones 4–8) behind it.



*See invasive alert on page 16.



◀ Highlight bolder forms.

Although the masses of 'Hameln' fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln', Zones 6-9) along these borders are eye-catching in their own right, their billowy form also accentuates the plants with a stronger presence, such as the 'Emerald 'n' Gold' euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald 'n' Gold', Zones 5-9), the 'Helmond Pillar' Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* 'Helmond Pillar', 5-8), and the towering purple New Zealand flax (*Phormium tenax* 'Atropurpurea', Zones 8-11).

HOW TO DIVIDE GRASSES

Because of their massive root systems and large size, grasses can be intimidating to divide. But it's crucial to do so every few years. A grass whose size isn't kept in check often dies out in the middle, leaving you with an unruly and unsightly plant. Here are three simple steps to ensure your success:



STEP [1]

Dig the entire grass out of the ground, making sure to preserve as much of the existing root-ball as possible.



STEP [2]

Use a saw to cut the root-ball into clumps approximately 8 to 12 inches in diameter. Cutting through dirt and roots isn't good for a saw, so don't use one you value.



STEP [3]

Replant each of the divisions, and water them in well.

continued on page 62 ➡

[Create a relaxing atmosphere]

Everyone likes to kick back in their garden, and nothing sets a soothing tone like an ornamental grass. Even in the Southwest, where spiky cacti and pointed succulents abound, you'll always see a few grasses throw in to add some serenity. The softness of grasses makes you feel instantly relaxed, enabling you to pause, take a deep breath, and enjoy the surroundings.



▲ **Provide a peaceful backdrop.** When grasses, like this purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*, Zones 5–9), are planted around a seating area, their soothing texture instantly transforms the area into a space for relaxation and quiet conversation.



◀ **Counterpoints can be calming.**

The wide array of plants surrounding this outdoor tiki hut could make people feel a bit uneasy, but the Japanese blood grasses (*Imperata cylindrica** 'Rubra', Zones 5–9) act like soft exclamation points, providing splashes of tranquil consistency to the scene.



▲ **Soften the edges.** Mounds of Mexican feather grass (*Stipa tenuissima*, Zones 7–11) look like sand dunes along this straight path. The grasses create a meandering mood for a journey that might otherwise feel like a quick trip.

[Give a view some mystery]

Larger grasses act like living walls—only better. The glimpse of a scene through their blades creates a sense of secrecy—making you wonder, “What’s beyond those plumes?”



▼ **Obscure the view, don't block it.** This sturdy giant feather grass (*Stipa gigantea*, Zones 7-11) offers the home owners a sense of privacy, while giving visitors a sense of anticipation about what is around the corner.



MORE GREAT GRASSES FOR SCREENING

▲ **EVERGREEN MISCANTHUS**

Name: *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis*

Zones: 6 to 9

Size: 6 to 8 feet tall and wide

Conditions: Full sun; well-drained soil

PLUME GRASS ▶

Name:

*Saccharum
ravennae**

Zones: 6 to 9

Size: 10 to
12 feet tall and
4 to 6 feet wide

Conditions: Full
sun; well-drained soil



STRIPED GIANT REED ▼

Name: *Arundo donax** 'Variegata'

Zones: 7 to 9

Size: 6 feet tall and 2 feet wide

Conditions: Full sun; well-drained soil





Three garden wishes



Nancy DuBrule-Clemente is the owner of Natureworks Horticultural Services in Northford, Connecticut.

WHEN I FIRST found the magic lantern in my garden and realized that I was actually going to be granted three garden wishes, I thought, "This is easy: Make the peonies, wisteria, and irises bloom for twice as long." After thinking about that for a while, I realized a longer bloom time would diminish their wonder. Perhaps I should make the Japanese beetles that devour the raspberries in my garden disappear. No, that would surely mess up the balance of nature by taking them out of the food chain. This three-wishes thing was turning out to be harder than I thought. I didn't want to waste my wishes, and I found that I was attempting to wish with a conscience. So I put the magic lantern down and let it sit for a week before finally picking it up and rubbing it. When the genie appeared, this is what I asked for:

WISH NUMBER 1: For all the invasive plants to go back to where they came from. The list of plants that are destroying properties and creating frustration and endless work for gardeners in the Northeast is ever growing. Any property left untended for a few years becomes encased in choking vines. Fields become a sea of autumn olive trees (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), which spread their seeds far and wide. The forest floor is covered with garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), which is allelopathic, preventing everything else from growing nearby. Invasive plants are also causing people to use lots of strong herbicides in the name of habitat restoration, which is a dubious solution—at best.

WISH NUMBER 2: An effective, organic, and safe solution to keep the voles out of my garden. At first, I was going to ask to eliminate voles, but I realized that they are part of the web of life and are food for all sorts of creatures, such as hawks, owls, cats, and snakes. What I really want is for them to stay away from my plant roots and bulbs. I'd like a magic potion that is easy to use and not too expensive, or a barrier that would really work and is easy to install.

WISH NUMBER 3: An organic vegetable, herb, and flower garden for every grammar and middle school. The school gardens could be used as teaching tools in all of the subjects: science, math, reading, and writing. Students would learn about where their food comes from, the life cycles of insects, soil biology, the interrelatedness of living creatures, and so much more. The gardens would help connect the next generations to the cycles of nature and get them outside and away from their computers and other electronic gadgets. They would provide a living classroom where students and teachers could spend more time outdoors.





Pam Morris is a gardener who blogs at Tales from the Microbial Laboratory from her garden in Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina.

I LIVE ON AN ACRE of land just off the coastal marshes of the Atlantic Ocean. One of the best things about my garden are the trees: six large live oaks, each with its own story to tell. Another great thing is the soil: a wonderful, organic, sandy loam. My mom used to say that it looked like the kind of soil that you would buy in a bag. I think she was right because everything grows like crazy—whether you want it to or not—with a few, glaring exceptions. So three wishes for my garden? That's easy.

WISH NUMBER 1: A pickled Florida betony craze. *Stachys floridana*, commonly known as Florida betony, plagues my winter garden. Down here, we make it through the hurricane season and then Florida betony strikes—swirling through my winter garden, raining white tubers, and bringing with it chaotic surges of mint green, which flood my perennial beds and turn the fleeting order in my garden upside down. If my wish were granted, then pickled tubers, packaged in lovely recycled glass jars, would become all the rage. Betony hunters would be found trolling my neighborhood, begging me to let them dig up my Florida betony, to which I would coyly reply, "Well, I suppose so..." From there, we would find betony pesto, fried betony (replacing the ever-popular fried okra), and the delicious vegan BLT (betony, lettuce, and tomato) sandwich. Within a few seasons, my garden would be betony-free, the foodies would be happy, and the local economy would be stimulated.

WISH NUMBER 2: A low-chill-requirement herbaceous peony that will thrive in my USDA Hardiness Zone 8b garden that often seems more like a Zone 9. Recently, I was walking in downtown Philadelphia and came across a small garden with white peonies cascading over a wrought-iron fence, and I had to stop and smell them. Of all the plants I miss from my days spent gardening farther north, it's the herbaceous peony that I miss the most. I know I should try the tree peonies and quit whining, and perhaps one day soon, I shall. But come on now. We southern gardeners have shared with our neighbors to the north a few cold-hardy camellias (it's not our fault that the deer eat them, is it?). Can't you peony breeders focus on finding a few peonies that tolerate our too-warm winters? Can't you put a bit more time into this? It would be most appreciated.

WISH NUMBER 3: A tool fairy. You know the kind I mean: one of those fairies that wanders your garden in the dark of night after you've gardened all day, barely making a sound, with no other goal than to go in search of neglected tools left out in the rain or hiding under variegated ginger leaves or lost in a tiny grove of black bamboo. You wouldn't know it was there, except that every morning your Felcos, which you left out in the rain, would be in their place, razor sharp and shiny. Your favorite transplanting spade, which was stuck in the ground next to the asparagus bed, would now be leaning against the live oak in the front garden, its blade glistening, ready to help you divide clumps of daylilies. Can you imagine anything more wonderful than a tool fairy?





Annie Stoffel is an environmental/landscape designer who lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

THE ART OF SELECTION is not one of my gardening strengths. I insist on growing eight varieties of tomatoes, even though they ultimately all end up in the same jar of sauce. I have umpteen something-eyed Susan species, even though no one—including me—can tell them apart. Handing me a seed catalog and a credit card is as dangerous as handing a \$50 bill to a kid in a candy store and asking for change. So deciding on just three wishes was a tough task.

WISH NUMBER 1: To relax when it comes to gardening choices. When challenged to pick my top garden wishes for this writing assignment (and to ignore the other 40), I laid awake at night, haunted by a vision of little personified plants and garden tools jumping up and down outside my window squealing, "Pick me! Pick me!" And that's when I knew what my first wish should be: Whenever I need to make a seemingly impossible garden decision, I have to remember that there's no wrong answer. I don't garden just to find the sweetest tomato or the brightest black-eyed Susan. I garden for the pleasure I find in trying.

WISH NUMBER 2: A little more time to savor what I work so hard to maintain. Like most gardeners who struggle to balance their professional careers with their passion for gardening, I wish I had more hours in the day. I cherish every minute I get between dinner and sunset, but there are never enough of those moments. Gardening in the evenings is my hobby and my relaxation, and it's the private time that my husband and I get to enjoy together. I rush home from the office on summer evenings, and before the door has time to close behind me, I begin peeling off my daytime layers. No more jewelry, polyester, or electronic devices. Bye-bye to the planner and the perky telephone voice; hello to the weathered cotton and a roomy pair of mud shoes. Before getting dirty, my husband and I take our daily stroll around our property, hand in hand, flirting with new blooms and sampling ripe pieces of fruit. These are the simple gardening moments in which I wish I could linger a little longer each day.

WISH NUMBER 3: A well-established tree. The value of large trees has become apparent since I moved into my surprisingly barren 60-year-old country home. Without a single existing tree or shrub, I was initially excited about the blank canvas from which I could create—unobstructed—any landscape I desired. Two years and a barely noticeable scattering of slow-growing twigs later, I'm still struggling to find my design inspiration within this open landscape. I want my landscape to tell a story, but every story I begin seems weak without the support of an established tree. I wish I had a giant magnolia, like the one in my grandmother's backyard, which could corral a small herd of grandchildren riding in its branches while grown-ups drank tea in the shade below. That one magnolia defined the landscape and all the childhood memories I have within it. I wish I could replicate the character of that one tree in my own backyard, in my own story.



Southern Plains

REGIONAL REPORT



Three garden wishes



Jimmy Turner is the senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum in Dallas, Texas.

I CAN IMAGINE myself sitting in the shade of my patio: sweating from gardening in the relentless Texas heat, sipping on a glass of sweet tea, and polishing that antique copper watering can I found at the local flea market, justifying the effort of polishing as a way to stay in the shade for a few more minutes. As I take that first scrub—poof!—a genie comes streaming out of the spout; after which, either I'd be gasping for air, running around and clucking like a scared chicken, or I'd just plain pass out. It's more than any Texas gardener could dream of: three garden wishes. But what should I wish for? When you garden in hell, do you wish for a big glass of ice water or total relocation? No, I would just have to come up with three wishes to make the landscape that I love just a little more bearable.



WISH NUMBER 1: Lots of shale and compost. Though rich, the blackland calcic clay soil that I have is a nightmare to garden in—hard as a rock when dry, sticky as superglue when wet, and about as fast draining as a mixing bowl full of thick batter. A full 4 inches of expanded shale and at least 6 inches of dark, crumbly compost gently mixed into my whole landscape should fix the problem. Yes, I know that I've already made beds with mature shrubs, trees, and turf. But it's my wish, so please make it happen without harming anything I've already planted. I can hardly wait to worm my fingers into my new soil without nearly breaking them.

WISH NUMBER 2: A full-time, 40-hour-a-week gardener. Wish number one is practical, so my second one should be something for me. I want a gardener, paid for life (my life, not his). I don't want just any laborer, either: I want a full-fledged English estate gardener, complete with accent, preferably a third or fourth generation gent with years of experience. I wish for someone to row out the vegetable beds with aubergines and care for the roses; a gardener who believes in the importance of manuring and hand spading the soil. Genie, if you find this too hard, then at least send me over a hard-working laborer for the weekends. A big yard, one person, and an old back aren't the best combination for gardening.

WISH NUMBER 3: A greenhouse. Even though I garden in USDA Hardiness Zone 8a, I still have severe "zone-itis" for some of the subtropicals that wouldn't survive a winter here, and I'd love to be able to keep my citrus trees and houseplants somewhere other than stuffed into every corner of my house and garage. With a beautiful and functional greenhouse, I could grow cooler-climate plants during the winter, start my veggies, force bulbs, and do so many other things. Did I mention that I want it to come complete with glass walls, automatic shade, heating, and cooling? I want all the bells and whistles, please. Oh, and make sure to have a nice toolshed attached so that my English gardener will have a place to store his wellies and spades.

Rocky Mountains

REGIONAL REPORT

Three garden wishes



Kate Gardner, author of the blog *The Manic Gardener*, writes in Bozeman, Montana.

THERE'S A SAYING about spring and fall in Bozeman, Montana: "If you blink, you'll miss them." Don't yawn, either, or you'll miss the growing season, too. Snow through April delayed planting this year; hail in July strafed and flattened the garden last year; a September frost ravaged my laden tomato plants the year before. Yes, I know—none of these counts as unusual in the northern Rockies, but that doesn't mean I have to like it. If my long-awaited garden genie appeared before me promising to grant three wishes, I would have no problem making my desires known.

WISH NUMBER 1: A cold-hardy peach tree. I'd love to see peaches hanging from the branches of a hardy tree espaliered against the south wall of my log cabin. I already have strawberries, raspberries, currants, and pie cherries. I can even grow apples, pears, and plums here. But no one has developed a peach tree that will grow in the northern Rockies. And, oh, how I long for a peach dripping sweet juices at the height of summer.

WISH NUMBER 2: Better soil. This damn dirt snaps trowels and tempers, wears out gloves and joints before their time, and bends shovels into curlicues worthy of a yogi. Two years ago, I could barely sink a trowel into it using both hands and all my strength, despite copious infusions of compost. That's when I turned to the spruce duff covering the front "yard." It seems to help, which is a first. (It's a first for the trees, too; they've hardly been a boon for my garden.) But I dread digging in the stuff. I, therefore, heartily wish for a light, loamy soil, loose and easy to work. The neighbors will no doubt miss watching me jump up and down on stubborn clods, but they'll just have to get their entertainment elsewhere.

WISH NUMBER 3: In lieu of a longer growing season, a greenhouse. I envision a double-paned glass greenhouse, roofed with plastic panels so that no hail, however heavy, could smash it. A greenhouse with cedar trim, automatic vents for hot days, and a sloped roof to shed snow. Make it with a real door, not a swath of plastic sheeting that I have to push aside and then anchor with a rock. Something just big enough to accommodate four half barrels with their tomato plants, and maybe a couple of chairs and a little table. And perhaps a small water feature beside the band platform—a little waterfall between marble statues would do. Should my garden genie be so inclined, I would willingly offer up celebratory gifts of one-of-a-kind Rocky Mountain peaches and fresh, greenhouse-grown tomatoes.



Illustrations: Chuck Lockhart. Photo: courtesy of Steve Durbin



LeAnn Locher
is a Portland, Oregon, gardener who blogs at Lelo in Nopo.



WHAT IF I could have it all? Three wishes from a genie who appears in my garden and says, "I'll grant you three gardening desires. Have at it." The sneaky snake in me wants to say I wish for more wishes, but in reality, three would pretty much cover the three different aspects of my personality and my garden: sweet, sassy, and smart.

WISH NUMBER 1: To talk to my grandparents in my own garden today. Joe and Leola were Kansas farmers, and when they retired, they grew flowers in rows, just like they grew their crops. One of my most treasured photos is of my grandparents, waving at the camera, standing in the middle of a million zinnias, four o'clocks, and black-eyed Susans. My grandparents are with me every time I see a four o'clock pop its head out of the ground in spring. I'd ask my grandfather, "Joe? What do you think is eating that seedling?" He'd shuffle over; examine the tiny seedling with his big, rough hands; and tell me not to worry about it. "Soon, you'll have more four o'clocks growin' than you'll know what to do with," he'd say. And he'd be right. They reproduce like crazy.

WISH NUMBER 2: A genie who can stop flapping her gums and start getting to work. I dream not of a genie with "the light brown hair" but of one who never tires of hard work, can prune for hours without getting carpal tunnel syndrome in her hands, and can dig and pull weeds without getting a stiff back the next morning. I want a genie who doesn't need a break after carting the first of 20 wheelbarrows full of gravel for that newly envisioned path along the side of the house. A genie comes to my garden and offers three wishes? I'm going to put her to work. Especially come fall, when I'm spent from the whirlwind of spring and summer and the heat has exhausted my cool northwestern composure, but I still have to clean up the garden and plant all of the bulbs that I've convinced myself I need. Or when it's time to carefully mulch my zone-denying purchases (good luck!) or even dig the dahlias I've heard you're supposed to dig. (I've never done it, yet they faithfully return every year.) See? I already have an extensive list for my genie. And she had best change out of those pink satin harem pants and put on some jeans: It's going to get messy out there.

WISH NUMBER 3: Relief for the troubled honeybees. I think I'll pay this wish forward. With their drastically reducing numbers, the bees need it more than I do.



Amy Stewart is the author of *Wicked Plants*. She also blogs with a group of highly opinionated gardeners about all things horticultural at www.gardenrant.com.

IT'S TRUE: I live in one of the most beautiful places in the country. Therefore, I do feel the slightest bit guilty wishing for something beyond what I have. But there are some things that would make this West Coast paradise even better.

WISH NUMBER 1: Heat. No one who lives within sight of the ocean should be allowed to complain about the weather, but how I long for a hot day. The Pacific Ocean is like a giant air conditioner with a broken thermostat: It pumps icy-cold mist into my backyard day and night, summer and winter. I recently overheard my mother tell a friend, "My daughter works hard and she's accomplished a lot, but all she really wants is to grow a tomato." It's true. Is that too much to ask?

And don't tell me to buy a greenhouse. I don't want a greenhouse. I also don't want to grow cultivars of plants with names like 'Siberian Fur Hat' or 'Iceberg Frosty', so please don't send me seeds from your so-called cold lovers and tell me they're just as good as a 'Brandywine' or a 'Black Krim'. They're not.

WISH NUMBER 2: Neighbors with better gardens than mine. Believe me when I tell you that my garden is nothing to get excited about. It's chaotic, poorly planned, and weedy. But I've got a few interesting plants, like a hard-to-find lilac, Jupiter's beard (*Centranthus ruber**, USDA Hardiness Zones 5–8), a couple of obscure lilies, and some nice ornamental grasses. On the right day, at the right time of year, in the right light, it actually looks like a garden I'd want to take credit for.

But look up and down my street and what do you see? Grass. Rhododendron. Grass. I want to be surrounded by gardeners with more imagination than I can conjure up. I need motivation—and company. It was not until I experienced the extraordinary Garden Walk held in Buffalo, New York, that I realized that some people live in neighborhoods in which everyone has gardens. Plants get traded over the fence, and there are garden parties that last long into the evening, with gardeners drunkenly sharpening their Felcos and stumbling into the perennial border, cocktails in hand, to finish the weekend's work. It sounds dangerous but thrilling.

WISH NUMBER 3: Salvias—all of them. I am married to a book collector, and I've spent my entire marriage saying, "I just don't have that urge to collect." Then, one day, I walked around my garden and counted 25 different varieties of salvia, from the fuzzy red velvet sage (*Salvia confertiflora*, Zones 9–10) to a nameless Pepto-Bismol-pink salvia of unconfirmed origins. The mystery plant was so prolific in my first garden that I thought I'd never want to see it again, but after a few years, I started to miss it. So I snuck back to the old house and stole some cuttings while the new occupants were away. Maybe I am a collector, after all.

Salvias have a woody, herbal scent that hangs around them; they refuse water, and they can't bear fertilizer; they bloom in bright, audacious colors; and they're a magnet for hummingbirds. I read Betsy Clebsch's *The New Book of Salvias* like a novel; when she describes Mexican fuchsia sage (*Salvia iodantha*, Zones 9–11) as "scandent and floriferous," I tremble and sigh. My garden is fertile with longing and remorse. I wish for everything I don't have.



Illustrations: Chuck Lockhart. Photo: courtesy of K. C. Kratt

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3 SEEDLINGS To PLANT THEM ALL SAFELY, UNIFORMLY - and GROWING MORE STRONGLY

4 TREES TO GET 'TWO YEARS' GROWTH IN ONE' ?

5 FRUITING For EARLIER, HEAVIER, BEARING?

6 BULBS To START THEM VIGOROUSLY, Beating Soil-rot, Hastening Better Blooming

7 SEEDS To Help GERMINATION Percentage and SPEED EARLIER, BETTER YIELDS, including Vegetables

8 LAWNs To Make QUICKER, deeper, TOUGHER TURF from SEED, SOD, Stolons, Sprigs, HYDRO-seeding

9 XMAS TREES 17 HYDROSEEDING 22 FLOWERING PLANT

12 REFORESTATION 18 LANDSCAPING 23 INTERSCAPING

13 HYDROPONICS 19 PROPAGATION 24 CUT FLOWERS

14 FIELD CROPS 20 ANTI-EROSION 25 WEATHER DAMAGE

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3 Steps to make a COLOR THEME WORK



DESIGNERS: Sabrina and Freeland Tanner

LOCATION: Napa, California; USDA Hardiness Zone 9

CONDITIONS: Full sun; well-drained soil

► MATCH

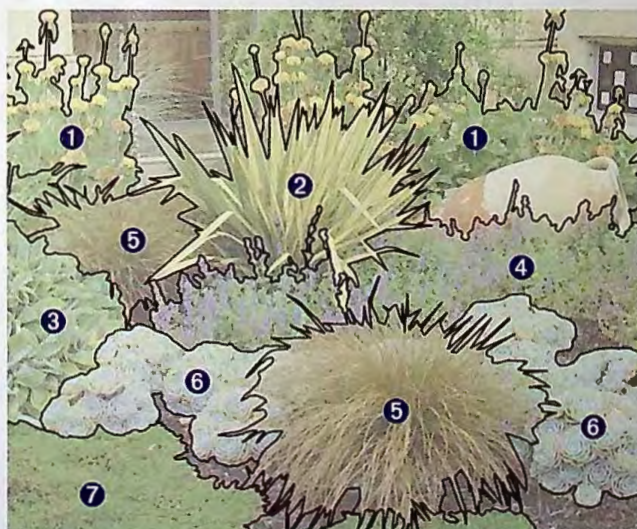
- The yellow theme of this planting accentuates the yellow tones of the building beyond.
- Yellow is represented in both foliage and flowers for textural interest.

► COMPLEMENT

- A scattering of complementary blue and purple highlights the yellow and keeps the planting from becoming predictable.

► REPEAT

- The terra-cotta urn adds a permanent accent to the planting, while the similarly hued sedge makes the pot seem as if it belongs.
- The golden tips of the hens and chicks echo the bronze sedge and the yellow-striped phormium.



PLANTS

- 1 **JERUSALEM SAGE** (*Phlomis fruticosa*, Zones 8–9)
- 2 **'YELLOW WAVE' PHORMIUM** (*Phormium* 'Yellow Wave', Zones 8–10)
- 3 **'COUNTESS HELEN VON STEIN' LAMBS' EARS** (*Stachys byzantina* 'Countess Helen von Stein', Zones 4–8)
- 4 **'BLUE WONDER' CATMINT** (*Nepeta* × *faassenii* 'Blue Wonder', Zones 4–8)
- 5 **ORANGE NEW ZEALAND SEDGE** (*Carex testacea*, Zones 7–9)
- 6 **HENS AND CHICKS** (*Sempervivum tectorum* cv., Zones 4–8)
- 7 **RED CREEPING THYME** (*Thymus praecox* 'Coccineus', Zones 4–9)

DO YOU HAVE A SUCCESSFUL SMALL BED?

Send a photo to: *Fine Gardening* Reader Photos, 63 S. Main St., PO Box 5506, Newtown CT 06470, or fg@taunton.com.



Photos: p. 74, courtesy of Sabrina and Freeland Tanner; p. 75, Jerry Pavia



living color

Orange crush

ORANGE IS SUCH A HAPPY COLOR, isn't it? It brings to mind jack-o'-lanterns, spectacular sunsets, and googly-eyed goldfish. And if you want to be seen, it is the color for you. Orange speaks boldly in a garden, too. It's a warm color that turns up the heat and says, "Look at me!" Here are a few flowers that will make your beds just a bit juicier.

—Michelle Gervais is an associate editor.

Butterfly weed →

NAME: *Asclepias tuberosa*

USDA HARDINESS ZONES: 4 to 9

SIZE: 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; fertile, well-drained soil

BLOOMS: Midsummer to early fall

Butterfly weed is a plant native to North America that (you might have guessed) is a magnet for butterflies, especially monarchs. It's a tough, drought-tolerant plant that doesn't mind poor soil. What it does mind, though, is transplanting. Site it carefully, and enjoy its self-sown seedlings wherever they pop up. Butterfly weed is late to emerge in spring. It may be wise to mark its spot to avoid damaging it during the spring-planting rush.



← Orange Meadowbrite™ coneflower

NAME: *Echinacea*
'Art's Pride'

ZONES: 3 to 8

SIZE: 2 to 3 feet tall and
1 to 2 feet wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun;
well-drained soil

BLOOMS: Midsummer to
late summer

Purple coneflowers are mainstays of the summer garden. There's been a breeding explosion in the past few years, and this is one of the most interesting new cultivars to result. Rather than purple or pink, Orange Meadowbrite™ is an intriguing shade of peach-orange. It's a bit disconcerting at first—seeing such a classic flower in an unlikely color—but you'll soon fall madly in love.



↑ Marigold

NAME: *Tagetes* spp. and cvs.

ZONES: Annual

SIZE: 6 to 36 inches tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; fertile, well-drained soil

BLOOMS: Summer

Stop and take another look at the flats of marigolds in the nursery next spring. Marigolds are reliable, trouble-free annuals that perform all season long. Their citrus colors are refreshing and bright, and they come in myriad sizes and shapes; choose double flowers the size of your fist, or plant a low, bushy mounder dotted with dainty single flowers. Marigolds' ferny, aromatic foliage and cheery flowers are sure to bring back memories and make a big statement.



↑ 'Jelena' witch hazel

NAME: *Hamamelis* × *intermedia* 'Jelena'

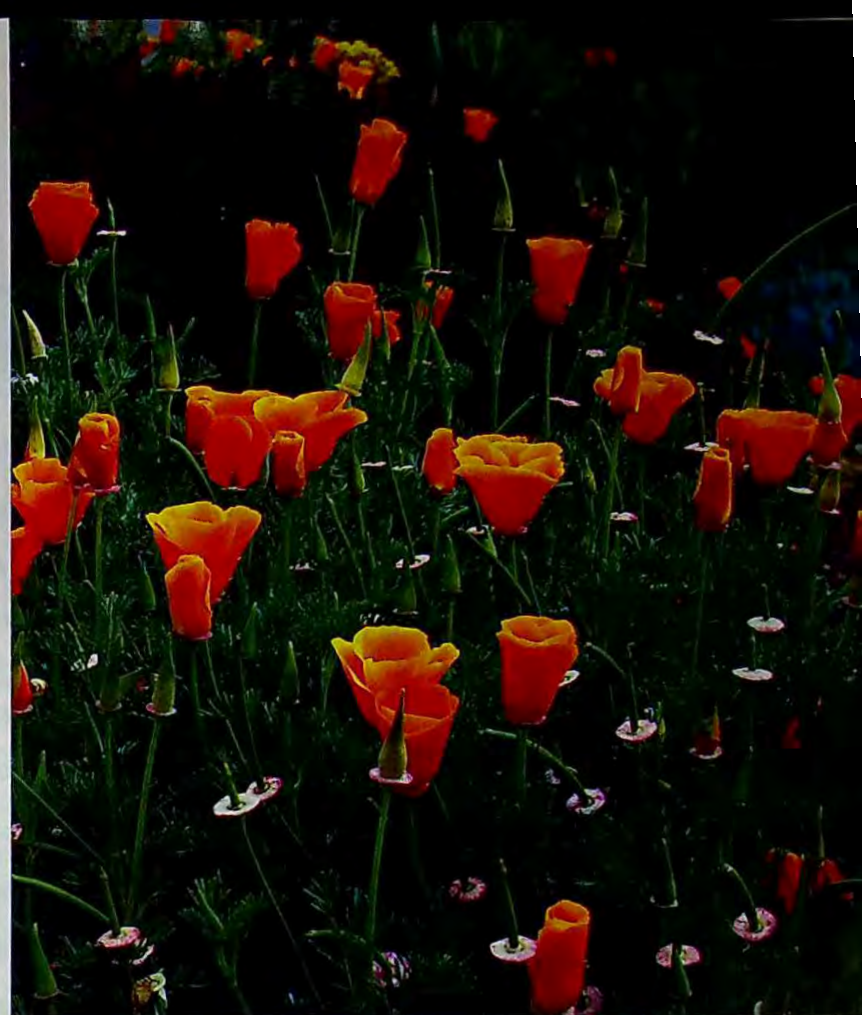
ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: Up to 12 feet tall and wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun to partial shade; moist, well-drained, slightly acidic soil

BLOOMS: Early to midwinter

You can have orange in your garden in winter, too. While most witch hazels are varying shades of yellow or gold, 'Jelena' sports large, frilly orange flowers that appear in midwinter. Everyone should have a witch-hazel tree in their garden for its flowering time alone, and 'Jelena' kicks it up a notch with its warmer color.



↑ California poppy

NAME: *Eschscholzia californica*

ZONES: Annual

SIZE: 12 inches tall and 6 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; poor, well-drained soil

BLOOMS: Summer

A beloved California native, California poppy is also the state's official flower, and it can be found growing wild in fields and on rocky outcroppings all along the West Coast. Gardeners in other parts of the country can grow California poppies, too. Add them to a rock garden for a splash of California sunshine. They reseed prolifically, so you'll have them year after year.



← Crown imperial

NAME: *Fritillaria imperialis*

ZONES: 5 to 9

SIZE: 3 to 4 feet tall and 1 foot wide

CONDITIONS: Full sun; fertile, well-drained soil

BLOOMS: Late spring

Like most fritillaries, this flowering bulb will make you stop and stare. Atop its dark stems, the dangling crown of blooms is topped by a pineapple-like plume of leaves. The effect is majestic, wild, and otherworldly. But you won't linger close for long. The plants have a distinct skunky odor. Crown-imperial bulbs should be planted on their sides to avoid rot because they sprout from a depression in the bulb's surface. After flowering, allow the plant to die back before cutting its foliage to the ground.

pronunciation guide



How do you say it? Go online to find out.

To hear the pronunciation of many of the botanical names listed in this guide, visit www.finegardening.com/hearlatin

-A-C-

- Abies koreana* (AB-ee-ays kor-ee-AY-nah), p. 54
Acer circinatum (AY-sir sir-sin-AY-tum), p. 39
Alliaria petiolata (al-ee-AIR-ee-ah pet-ee-oh-LAY-tah), p. 66
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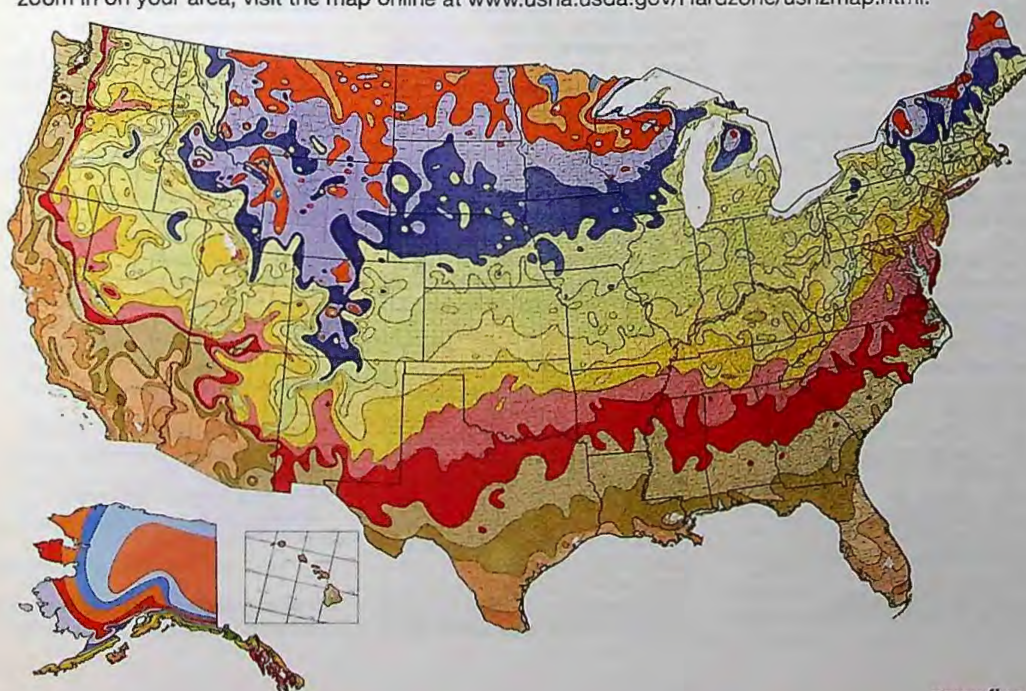
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The USDA plant hardiness zone map

The zones stated in *Fine Gardening* are based on several sources and should be treated as general guidelines when selecting plants for your garden. Many other factors may come into play in determining healthy plant growth. Microclimates, wind, soil type, soil moisture, humidity, snow, and winter sunshine may greatly affect the adaptability of plants. For more information and to zoom in on your area, visit the map online at www.usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/ushzmap.html.



Average Annual Minimum Temperature

Temperature (°C)	Zone	Temperature (°F)
-45.6 and Below	1	Below -50
-42.8 to -45.5	2a	-45 to -50
-40.0 to -42.7	2b	-40 to -45
-37.3 to -40.0	3a	-35 to -40
-34.5 to -37.2	3b	-30 to -35
-31.7 to -34.4	4a	-25 to -30
-28.9 to -31.6	4b	-20 to -25
-26.2 to -28.8	5a	-15 to -20
-23.4 to -26.1	5b	-10 to -15
-20.6 to -23.3	6a	-5 to -10
-17.8 to -20.5	6b	0 to -5
-15.0 to -17.7	7a	5 to 10
-12.3 to -15.0	7b	10 to 15
-9.5 to -12.2	8a	15 to 20
-6.7 to -9.4	8b	20 to 25
-3.9 to -6.6	9a	25 to 30
-1.2 to -3.8	9b	30 to 35
1.6 to -1.1	10a	35 to 40
4.4 to 1.7	10b	40 to 45
4.5 and Above	11	40 and Above

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talkin' dirt with...

Paul James

THE HOST OF *GARDENING BY THE YARD* EXPLAINS WHAT HE ALWAYS WANTED TO DO ON TELEVISION AND WHY THE WORD "GREEN" MAKES HIM CRINGE

Although *Gardening by the Yard* is still airing, no more episodes are being produced. What was it like being one of the last real gardening shows on HGTV?

You mean the "G" in HGTV? You know to have a show that ran longer than *Cheers* certainly makes me proud. The great response from viewers makes me much more proud. But I was ready for a change.

Was there anything that you never got to do on the show? I wanted to swear.

So why turn to a Web site now? Is it just for the opportunity to curse? That certainly is a perk. It's www.gardenerguy.com, and I'll be doing many of the same how-to kinds of things that I did on my show but in a more condensed form.

Is your blog your chance to rail against all sorts of things that you couldn't because you were on TV? Absolutely! It's completely liberating. I don't want to suggest that I was—"censored" is too strong a word—

but there are network standards and people that you don't want to upset. Now I can upset anybody I want.

Is there anybody you're looking forward to upsetting? All of the people and companies that think that we need to douse our yards with every synthetic chemical imaginable just to have a nice garden.

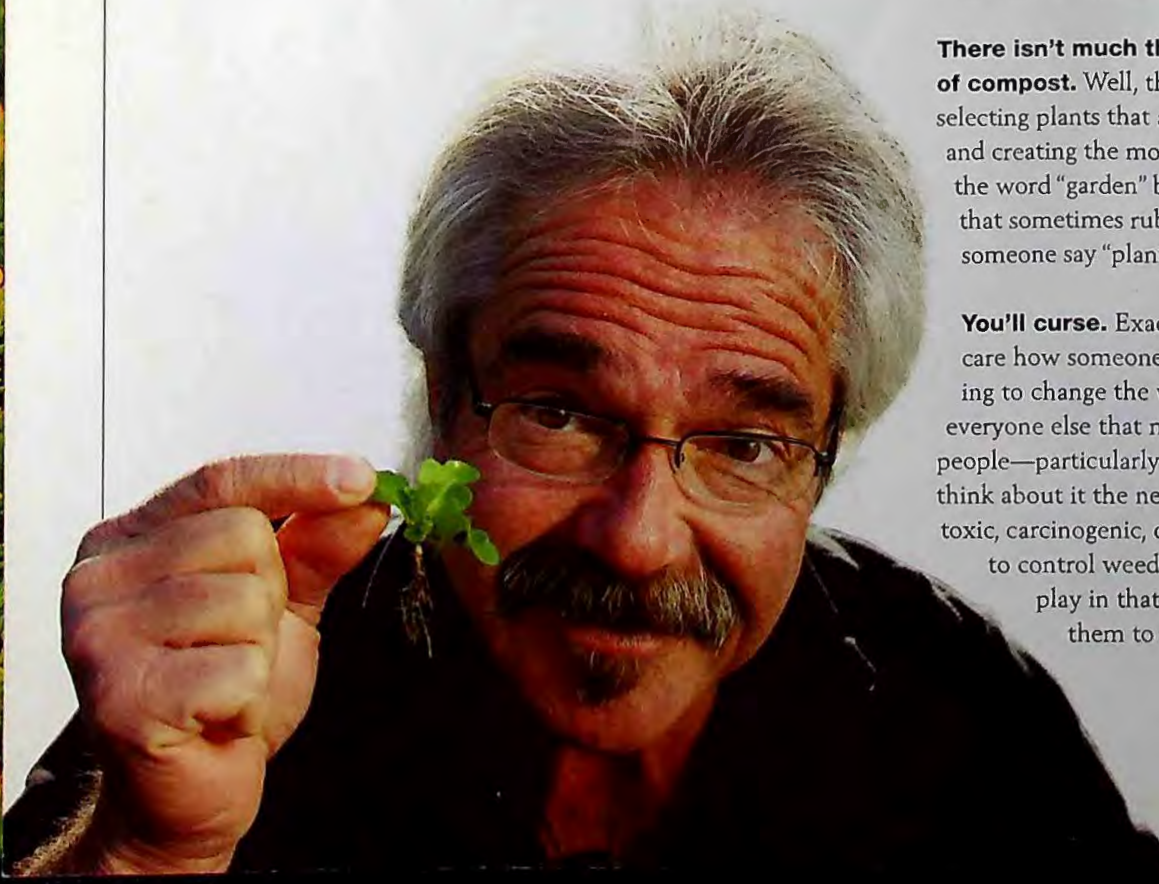
We got where we are now thanks to big companies who developed very clever ads, so we've been convinced that we have to rely completely on synthetic chemicals. And it's absolutely wrong. It's a complete myth.

Do you think, though, that the public mind is changing about that already? The green revolution is everywhere. I cringe every time I hear the word "green." There is a lot of "greenwashing" going on these days, where many of the companies that manufactured synthetic chemicals for decades are now introducing lines of more ecofriendly products, yet they continue to manufacture those chemicals that harm the environment. It's a public-relations scam. My ultimate aim is to convince people that there really aren't that many products that we need.

There isn't much that can't be solved with a shovelful of compost. Well, that's certainly a huge part of it. As is selecting plants that aren't prone to insect and disease attack, and creating the most biodiverse garden you can. I prefer the word "garden" because "landscape" is another word that sometimes rubs me the wrong way. And if I ever hear someone say "plant material," I don't know what I'll do.

You'll curse. Exactly. At the end of the day, I don't really care how someone else chooses to garden. I'm not trying to change the world, and I'm not trying to convince everyone else that my way is the only way. I'm just asking people—particularly those with kids and pets—to at least think about it the next time they decide to put down some toxic, carcinogenic, or mutagenic agent on their lawn just to control weeds and then let their kids and pets go play in that same lawn the next day. I'm just asking them to think about it.

—Interview conducted by
Steve Aitken, editor.



Captivating combination



1 'Waterlily' autumn crocus (*Colchicum* 'Waterlily', USDA Hardiness Zones 4-9)

2 'Angelina' sedum (*Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina', Zones 6-11)

CONDITIONS Full sun; well-drained soil

Designed by the staff of White Flower Farm in Litchfield, Connecticut
Photo by Michelle Gervais

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